THE TEST

BURT ESTES HOWARD

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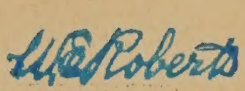

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BY

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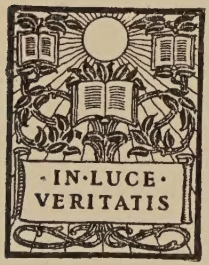

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THE TEST

"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

John xiii: 35.

The long shadows, sloping eastward, tell of the declining day. The cooling breeze begins to blow in from the sea, and the dusty flowers that dot the Syrian desert lift their heads as the moist fingers of the wind caress them. In a quiet place without the city, where the rumble of traffic reaches the ear only as a confused murmur, a Galilean peasant has gathered about him a little company of common folk, and is talking to them. He is speaking in the homely vernacular of the people, and they listen with wistful attention to the simple words that fall from his lips. There is no attempt at eloquence or florid rhetoric. As gently as a shepherd speaks to the lambs of his flock, this Galilean talks to the men and women who are clustered about him.

It is a very ordinary lot of people who stand there,— just the common folk from the shop, and the field, and the bench, and the fishing-net. The poor, and the blind, and the sick are

there, side by side with the troubled, and the discouraged, and the sinful; but while he speaks to them, the narrow walls of their little lives push out into the infinite, and the cares that infest the day are forgotten. He is talking about religion, a religion so simple that the wayfaring man, foolish though he be, need not err therein. It is a religious character, of what a man is in himself, rather than of what he believes; a religion so broad that it makes a shrine of every loving heart, and life itself one mighty sacrament. Would anyone hunger and thirst after such a religion? It is not far to seek. There is no secret about it, known only to the initiated. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." Love one another. That is all. And as they listen to this new teaching, so different from that of the Scribes and Pharisees to which they had been accustomed, the heart of the people is filled with a new joy, the love which this Galilean peasant pours out upon them all alike seems to burn up every vestige of their meanness and their sin, and, when he has finished and quietly gone his way, the people return home with a strange spell upon them, and begin to live better lives.

It is the fourteenth day of June, in the year 325. Before a great building in the heart of Nicea, the second capital of Bithynia, is gath-

ered a crowd of delegates to an important church council. A motley crowd it is, of all ages and tongues, each man shouting at the top of his voice, and enforcing his assertions by wild gesticulations. High above all others rise the shrill, piercing shrieks of a group of Egyptians, "brandishing their arguments like spears." There are between three and four hundred of these delegates, and with them is collected a mighty company of laymen and those drawn by curiosity and the howling babel of tongues. The doors of the building fly open, and the bishops, and presbyters, and deacons pour into the great hall, and arrange themselves with much confusion on the benches provided for them. In the center of the room, a small throne supports a copy of the Gospels, while at the far end of the hall a chair of state gleams and glistens in magnificent splendor. Suddenly the wrangling and the noisy discussion give place to a deep silence. There is a stir at the door. Gorgeously apparelled officers of court move slowly down the aisle. A torch, swung solemnly by a cursor, lifts the audience to its feet. In the hush of expectancy, oppressive in its breathless intensity, there comes a sound of heavy footsteps, and, like a Greek god, towering of stature, strong-built and handsome, the Emperor Constantine strides down the long hall, dazzling the eyes of

the simple with his regal state. In his long black hair is fastened a crown of shining pearls, and his purple robe, as he moves majestically down the great aisle, burns and glows with precious stones. Slowly he approaches the golden chair, and, as he seats himself upon it, the turmoil of debate, full of bitter invective and recrimination, belches forth. The Emperor raises his hand for silence. He urges the council to remember that they are Christian men, and to conduct themselves accordingly. But the ecclesiastics are keyed to a frenzy, and the fierce discussion breaks forth with renewed passion. Two words are shouted back and forth across the aisle, words which form the hoarse battle-cry of the opposing factions: "HOMOOUSION!" "HOMOIOUSION!" One party is yelling, "He is of the SAME substance!" The other howls back, "Nay, he is of LIKE substance!" It is all about a little *iota*, the least letter in the whole Greek alphabet. So the war of tongues rages. After six weeks of wrangling, there issues forth from this gathering of representatives, a remarkable document, which is supposed to crystallize the true faith of the Christian church. It reads as follows:

"We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of all things, visible and invisible.

"And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father, the only begotten, i. e. of the very essence of the Father, God of God, and Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance of the Father: by whom all things were made in heaven and on earth; who for us men, and for our salvation, came down and was incarnate and was made man; he suffered and the third day he rose again, ascended into heaven; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

"And in the Holy Ghost.

"And those who say: there was a time when he was not; and: he was not before he was made; and: he was made out of nothing, or out of another substance or thing, or that the Son of God is created or changeable or alterable; they are condemned by the holy catholic and apostolic church."

Then these bishops, and elders, and deacons went home, and using this Nicene Creed as a test of discipleship, they persecuted all who would not accept it — to the glory of God! From that day to this, the stress in religion has been shifted from the life to be lived to the creed to be believed. From that day to this, there have been two definitions of discipleship, the definition of Christianity and the definition of Jesus,— and the two touch at no single point.

"When one reads the creed that was given by Jesus and the Creeds that have been made by Christians, he cannot fail to detect an immense difference, and it does not matter whether he select the Nicene Creed or the Westminster Confession." Were the Athanasian Creed and the simple statement of the Master printed in parallel columns, it would be hard to believe that both were intended to serve the same end, to be a basis of fellowship. He who accepts the Creeds may be an adherent of Christ, but only the man who loves is a disciple of Jesus, — and the two are not the same.

"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." Jesus arrived at his conception of love as the one thing at the heart of religion, after a process of growth and study. Brought up in the knowledge and observance of the thousand rules and regulations that had fastened themselves like barnacles to the Tables of the Law, he had gradually emancipated himself from them, and had come to consider only the substance of the Ten Commandments as of worth and weight. Later his position changed. He reduced the Ten Commandments to two. "A certain lawyer asked him a question, tempting him, Teacher, which is the great commandment of the law? And he saith unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart, and

with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And a second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hangeth the whole law and the prophets." This was a decided advance beyond the old ecclesiastical régime, with its multiform requirements and its intricate network of outside observances; and had Jesus stopped there, he would have made a mighty contribution to the freeing of men from the thraldom of legalism. But as he thought the thing over in his own mind, as he sifted and weighed the various symbols and rites and theories, he came to a conclusion which sets aside the whole system of ceremonial and theology which men had drawn about the religious idea. Even the two-fold requirement of love to God and love to men seems too complex for Jesus, so we find him, at the last, eliminating the one element which has been regarded by men everywhere as absolutely essential to any religion at all, and simplifying his creed until it contained a single, wonderfully explicit article: "This is my commandment, that ye love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." There is nothing about love to God in it. There is no demand that men should pour out their affections on an unseen Deity. That matter would take care of itself.

Love one another. That was all there was to it. Love one another. That seemed to cover the whole field of human relationships. It is very clear and very simple,— till one tries to live it.

There is something sublime in the courage of Jesus, as he stands there in the midst of the ritualists, and doctors, and schoolmen, and casuists of his time, and dares to risk his religion to a single proposition. He sent his followers into the world with the simplest test that men ever assumed in order to determine their fellowship. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." Nothing more,— *and nothing less.* There is no catechizing of a man to find out what he believes concerning certain dogmas. Jesus did not seem to have much patience with the Scribes and Pharisees, with the legalists and formalists of the church of his day. A religious man, to his way of thinking, was one who loved his fellowmen. It made little difference what his creed was, or his theological views. These things do not affect a man's life very much. But a man cannot love deeply without having it run up through every fiber of his character and flow out through every act. It is practically impossible to get men to think alike with reference to things that none of us know very much about, and where ignorance

is supplemented by imagination and desire. But men can all love pretty much alike. The language of the heart is one language the world over, and it does not require much mental capital to understand it. When Jesus, then, based his religion on love, he changed the whole scheme of religious association, he broke down the theological partitions that separate men, tore away the division fences of dogma that run between the creeds, and gave men a bond of unity that goes down deep into human life. Religion? Love. It is just as simple as that.

But even the apostles could not grasp the simplicity of Jesus' gospel. They must needs mix it with their old notions of sectarianism and warp it to their petty philosophies. Perhaps it is not strange that men who had inherited so much prejudice, and who had such a narrow outlook upon life, could not see a thing that was made so plain to them. The world seems to prefer mystery to simplicity. There is something alluring about the inscrutable. We are all prone to discount what we can understand and to go wandering after the occult. We want a leader who can mystify us with miracles and incantations and signs. Religion is acceptable only when it masquerades in priestly superstitions and speaks in mumbling formulas out of some holy place or through the pages of some sacred book. We hunt dili-

gently for religion everywhere but in our own hearts. The man who gives himself to this or to that form of worship, or to this or to that institution, or to this or to that creed, may be religious, but he is not religious because of these things. According to Jesus, it is the man who *loves* who is religious. Wherever a man loves, be he Jew or Gentile, Mohammedan or Buddhist, or a pagan without the pale of all the creeds, he is a disciple of Jesus, the lover of men.

What a strange, mixed-up affair men have made of religion! What began as a way of living became a "scheme of salvation." And because we have been wont to identify religion with rites and ceremonies and sacraments, with these outside things that touch the inner life so slightly, this definition of Jesus appears inadequate and altogether too simple. There is not enough of the smoke of the altar in it and the thundertones of the Terrible One; not enough of Westminster Abbey and the Council in the Jerusalem Chamber. It is full of the open air of the hills, and the breath of the sea, and the freedom of children. It lifts a man's soul out of the feverish arena where he has been struggling with words and phrases, with dogmas and doctrines, and says to him: "Never mind about those things. If you want to be a religious man, if you want to be a

righteous man, the thing for you to do is to become a loving man. Do not worry over atonements and penalties and things of that sort. Just love one another. There is nothing better or higher than that."

Jesus was talking about love, not sentiment. There is a vast difference between the two. Love is far deeper than sentiment. It gets down into the roots of life, below the passions and emotions. It is a constant quality, that does not need to be called forth by any lovable traits in the object toward which it is directed. It is not dependent on anything outside itself. Do you think that Jesus loved his disciples because they were more attractive than other men, that crude, ignorant, wrangling crowd, with their petty and mistaken notions, and their poor little ambitions that did not reach beyond a place in some little municipal triumph that they supposed Jesus had come to set up in the world? Do you think that he loved them because of anything he could see in them? The love of Jesus, any real love, is part of a man's being. The sun shines because its heart is afire. I do not need to bring my match and my bit of kindling whenever I want the sun to light and warm my garden. It beams, and glows, and pours out its splendor upon the earth, until there is not room enough to receive it, and it runs over the edges and drips off into bound-

less space,— not because my few roses have roused its sleeping soul, but because it can't help shining, sunshine is the very utterance of its being. That is the way with love. It needs nothing to kindle it. It is spontaneous. It rays out of the heart like the sunshine, and falls on the evil and on the good alike. It is large-heartedness,— that is the word,— a heart big enough to see the divine possibility in every poor waif that struggles along in the sodden haunts of wretchedness and woe, big enough to get under it and help it up.

Love idealizes its object. That is the ground of a man's faith and courage. Love dreams dreams, then sets about making the dreams come true. That was the inspiration of Jesus. He was keenly sensitive to the wickedness and depravity and hypocrisy of the people about him. No stain on the souls of men escaped his notice. But he had a supreme faith in manhood, and a vision. Over and above every poor, soiled fragment, he saw the thing it might be, the clean, white soul it might become. In the tattered bits of broken manhood and womanhood, he saw the prophecy of a divine wholeness that they were meant to have, and his love set itself to work and bent under the world's burden, that the wounded, staggering feet of the miserable and sad might struggle upward toward the perfect. It was because he loved that he

suffered. Love never faileth. It hopeth all things, believeth all things, endureth all things.

No man can be truly religious, religious after the fashion of Jesus, and grow careless of the world's misery. No man can go down into the deeps of life and try to bear its stripes, and be anything less than a disciple of Jesus, though he may have never so much as heard of him. The organized religions of men may not acknowledge such a soul, but he bears branded on his body the marks of his Master. I sometimes think there is nothing in life quite so dreadful as the indifference of fashionable people to the cry of the outcast and uttermost. The social world goes on with its butterfly frivolities, its pitiful and puttering inanities, while the souls and bodies of its brethren and sisters rot in the slums, and no man careth for them. It parades up and down the aisles of our churches and kneels with much display at the altar, and thinks to have "done its religion," while its ears are deaf to the dropping of tears and its soul hard to the breaking of hearts. It chants its creed and recites its prayers, and goes away with much complacency, deeming that it has done God's service, but it hears not the voice that comes cutting through the atmosphere of pretense and hypocrisy: "I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat; naked, and ye clothed me not. I was athirst and ye gave me no

drink; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not . . . Verily, verily, I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of these least, ye did it not unto me."

Said Christ our Lord, " I will go and see
How the men, my brethren, believe in me."
So he passed not again through the gates of birth,
But made himself known to the children of earth.

Then said the chief priests, and rulers, and kings,
" Behold, now, the Giver of all good things;
Go to, let us welcome with pomp and state
Him who alone is mighty and great."

With carpets of gold the ground they spread
Wherever the Son of Man should tread,
And in palace-chambers lofty and rare
They lodged him, and served him with kingly fare.

Great organs surged through arches dim
Their jubilant floods in praise of him;
And in church, and palace, and judgment hall,
He saw his image high over all.

But still, wherever his footsteps led,
The Lord in sorrow bent down his head,
And from under the heavy foundation-stones,
The son of Mary heard bitter groans.

And in church, and palace, and judgment hall,
He marked great fissures that rent the wall,
And opened wider and yet more wide
As the living foundation heaved and sighed.

"Have ye founded your thrones and altars, then,
On the bodies and souls of living men?
And think ye that building shall endure,
Which shelters the noble and crushes the poor?

"With gates of silver and bars of gold
Ye have fenced my sheep from their Father's fold;
I have heard the dropping of their tears
In heaven these eighteen hundred years."

"Oh, Lord and Master, not ours the guilt,
We build but as our fathers built;
Behold thine images how they stand
Sovereign and sole through all the land.

"Our task is hard,— with sword and flame
To hold thine earth forever the same,
And with sharp crook of steel to keep
Still, as thou leftest them, thy sheep."

The Christ sought out an artisan,
A low-browed, stunted, haggard man,
And a motherless girl, whose fingers thin
Pushed from her faintly want and sin.

These he set in the midst of them,
And as they drew back their garment's hem
For fear of defilement, "Lo, here," said he,
"The images ye have made of me!"

Religion has been too largely confined to energy that runs in vertical lines. It has been regarded as something that has to do with God

and the individual. But Jesus took these vertical lines and bent them till they ran horizontally, and made religion a relationship between the individual and his fellowman. Jesus did not seem to care much for sacraments. He stood for service. He was not careful for litanies, but for life.

A writer in a recent number of the *Hibbert Journal* raises the question whether it is not time to abandon Christianity, and substitute something else in its place. I do not know but that the plan is a good one. We do not need *Christ*ianity any more. It cannot meet the wants of the present day. For ages *Christ* has been, and *Jesus* has been lost sight of. For ages men have come to our theological masters and said, like the Greeks of old, "Sirs, we would see Jesus," and instead of setting forth the simple Galilean, these masters have paraded their metaphysical Christ, their dogmatic lay-figure in place of the living lover of men. It is not the Christ that men want to see, nor any fictitious system builded thereon, but they would see the Man Jesus, and join the ranks of the great-hearted. Give men the vision they ask for,— the vision of a great, sympathetic human heart, on fire with love and quivering with life, the vision of one whose aim and whose agony of effort were to make the world better and who believed steadfastly in human possi-

bility; give men a glimpse of the most winsome personality that ever walked the highways of our common life, let them see *him*, stripped of the ecclesiastical millinery in which he has been for so long paraded before the world and released from the fetters in which theology has so long shackled him, and men will crowd after him, for he will stand to them as a mighty inspiration and as a never-failing hope. Yes, let us have something in the place of Christianity. I would suggest the simple religion of Jesus. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

THE MESSAGE OF MICAH

"What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

Micah vi: 8.

This young man had formed the commendable, but rather dangerous, habit of doing his own thinking. He stood up before the crystallized conservatism of his church, with its petty proprieties and its mechanical observances, and began to ask questions. When a man begins to ask questions in theological matters, it is a sure sign that something is going to happen. The church loves to dogmatize, but it is always a little impatient of cross-examination. It does not take kindly to the interrogation point. But any system of thought that bids for the respect of men, must be reasonable before it can be credible. It may not be physically demonstrable, but it dare not be irrational. The reasonableness of every philosophy is tested by questioning it. But the questions must be fair, sane, and in good faith. If we hold that the universe, both physically and morally, is a rational universe, then the demand

for a rational explanation of all its phenomena is a legitimate demand. Moreover, if a knowledge of the truth is desirable, the search for it should be safe and the telling of it secure. Yet the church, in every age, has exalted her own mouth-pieces above the prophets, the seers are driven forth, while the Scribes and Pharisees of a stilted and narrow orthodoxy sit in the seats of honor.

In the little village of Moresheth, on the maritime plain of Judea, not so far inland that the western winds lost the fresh smell of the sea, there lived one of these seers, a questioner, a truth-seeker and a truth-teller. The scholars of the world have written his name among the humbler men who have tried to be honest with their time, in their thinking and in their preaching. He was only a minor prophet, but he had gotten hold of a major truth; and having gotten hold of a truth, he was brave enough to tell it to his age. He did not say much that the centuries have considered worth preserving, but he spake one word to the world, that outlines a programme big enough to keep it busy to the end of time. It was a word out of his own experience, a message plucked from the heart of the life about him. He saw the gorgeous ritual, the pomp and the tinsel, the spectacular display with which the church of his day was trying to cover its spiritual

nakedness and moral poverty. The chants of the priests were ringing in his ears, and the smoke of the altars and the reek of swinging censers filled his nostrils. Formal religion seemed everywhere at its best. The temple courts were filled with worshipers, and the appointments of religious ceremonial were observed with scrupulous correctness. But the young Micah was not deceived. He knew, as we of to-day know, that the church may grow in numbers, increase its gifts, multiply its benefactions and extend its machinery, while the heart of it is hostile to, or at least negligent of, the true spirit of religion. He saw the oppression under which the people groaned. He saw men who prided themselves on their orthodoxy, praying to God and preying on their fellow-men with equal zeal. He saw the miserable cant and hypocritical piety that trampled the temple aisles on the Lord's day, and trampled upon the bodies and souls of men the other days of the week. The hollowness of it all, the sham and falsehood of this counterfeit religion, stirred the heart of Micah to the very bottom. That is not religion at all, he asserted, and then he began to ask questions. "What is it that God expects of a man? Is it this sort of thing? Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the most high God? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams,

or with ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" What is it that God wants? Does he want ceremonies, observances, rituals, ecclesiastical rites? Does he want *things?* Or does he want *men?* These questions go right to the root of the matter. They cut down to the very foundations of religion. They strip away the husks of it, and the rubbish, and get at its kernel.

Micah answers his own question. What is it that God expects of a man? "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" It was equivalent to saying: "You are a rational being. You have a conscience. You know what is right and what is wrong. Now then, God expects you to be a kind of man, not a mere religious mummer. He expects you to be the kind of a man that your own sense of right and wrong tells you that you ought to be. He expects you to be a square man, a loving man, a man who shapes his life by a firm faith in a moral order of things." It is simple enough, this creed of the young prophet, but it looms large when you come to put it into practice. And that is where the value of a creed is measured. There may be longer statements of faith, and doctrinal formulas that read

better, but the only creed that is worth a live man's while, is a creed that can be worked up into life. The important thing about any confession of faith is not how much of it can be believed, but how much of it can be lived. Truth is not an end in itself. It is a good thing to know the truth, but it is not enough. The end of truth is *being*. Religion, therefore, cannot be measured in degrees of credulity. This young prophet had learned that. To him religion was a matter of common sense. He does not set a man in front of a catechism or creed. He sets him squarely in front of a life, a definite, tangible, every-day sort of a life. He does not propose a set of formulated opinions, and say, "Believe that!" He sets up a type of character, a standard of conduct, and says, "Live that." There is no vagueness or ambiguity about it. There is no room for controversy. A man is not asked to believe something that he may or may not be able to assent to; but he is asked to *be* something that every bit of manhood in him tells him is the thing he ought to be. There is a virile religion, a fibrous, sturdy religion, with blood in it. There is a religion that challenges all a man's best. And look at the simplicity of it. To this young questioner, burrowing with relentless insight down to the very root of the thing, religion was no mere adjunct of life,—

it was life itself. It was no exotic to be coddled and cared for in some cloister, apart from the stress of the multiform forces out of which human experience is woven; it was not something too tender to be planted out where the life of men has to be lived and the endless struggle for existence goes on. Not that! But a resolute facing of the day's work, a sturdy trudging along the way where duty leads, an open heart for one's fellow-men and a humble devotion to one's highest ideals. That sums it all up, and when a man is living thus, when a man is so ordering his character and conduct that they will bear the plummet of rectitude, when he is meeting, so far as he understands them, the demands made upon him as a social unit, when he is true to the best he knows, that man is a religious man. I do not care what tag may be fastened to his theology, he may be Protestant or Catholic, Jew, Pagan, Mohammedan, Buddhist, or what not, but just so far as he is making his life straight and loving and sensitive to fine moral ideals, he is God's kind of a man, however much the Scribes and Pharisees of formal ecclesiasticism refuse to recognize him.

When we come to the last analysis of it, religion cannot be measured except in terms of character and conduct. This is simply another way of saying that religion cannot be

separated from life. Profession and opinion count for little. Formal religion is of no value whatever, save as it becomes the expression of an inward spirit. A thousand rams and ten thousand rivers of oil are no substitute for clean hands and a pure heart. Prayer and praise in the sanctuary have no virtue in themselves. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." The fruit of religion is right action. Ceremonies and observances are of worth only as they help us to live finer lives. They cannot take the place of them. No amount of belief in a system of theology or confession of faith is any equivalent for righteousness. The cross of Jesus was no mere make-shift to enable God to be less than just. It was no divine subterfuge through which God could call black white, and reckon a man as righteous, when he knew, and the man himself knew, that it was not true. Nay, when Jesus cried out to the men of his time: "Take up thy cross and follow me!" he was summoning them to a kind of life. He was not offering a substitute for it. Jesus never offered to be righteous for any body. He tried to get men to be righteous for themselves,— which is the only kind of righteousness worth having. He was not trying to devise some scheme whereby a righteousness not

their own should be imputed to men. He was striving to get men to *be* righteous, not merely reckoned so.

To believe in God is to believe enough in good to build our lives out of it. To follow Jesus is to get about the business of living as he did. To serve God is to do our day's work honestly, lovingly, and in a divine spirit. That is the true religion, the sanctification of the common task and daily toil, the glorifying of our common-place relationships,— to do right, to be kind, to walk in the light of the eternal verities. There is a whole mine of truth in the crude preachment of one of our Western cowboys, who was trying to illustrate his idea of religion. "It's this a-away," said he. "I works fer Jim, here. Well, s'pose I sits around the ranch-house from mornin' till night, singin' Jim's praises, tellin' what a good feller Jim is, an' how much Jim's did fer me and what I hopes Jim's goin' to do fer me by an' by,— why, *that* ain't servin' Jim! But when I gits out and rustles Jim's bunch o' cattle, an' sees they gits their feed and water reg'lar, and don't let 'em git losted none, and takes care of the sick ones, I reckon I'm servin' Jim jest about the way Jim wants to be served." Have I not read somewhere that "pure religion, and undefiled, before God and the Father, is this: to visit the widows and the fatherless in their afflic-

tion, and to keep himself unspotted from the world?"

We are oftentimes affronted by the very simplicity of great moral facts. For some reason or other, we get the notion that the most potent forces must be attended by more or less pomp and display. When Naaman, the leper, would be healed at the hands of the prophet, he was nigh to missing the blessing because he resented the simplicity of the method by which he was to secure it. The prophet did not even go to see him, but sent his servant with a single word: "Go wash in the Jordan!" But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said: "Behold, I thought he will surely come out to me and stand, and call on the name of his God, and strike his hand over the place and recover the leper!" There is a lingering desire in all of us for the dramatic. A religion that comes to us in every-day clothes we are a little shy of. We get our ideas of religion confused with temples, and smoking altars, and incense, and solemn litanies. But a religion for common men must be so simple that the least of us can understand it and the lowliest of us can get hold of it. For the important thing in the world is not religion, but men. And religion is to make men. It has no other purpose. The great God is not worrying about his paltry meed of praise and worship. The everlasting

Father is no Haman at the gate, insisting on his nod of recognition from every passer-by. Religion is not a duty. It is an opportunity. It is not something to make us right with an angry God. It is something to bring us to the fullness of our divine possibility as children of God. Paul caught the idea when he wrote to the men of Ephesus: "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ; till we all attain . . . a full-grown manhood." That is it. The whole aim and end of religious systems, and of religious teaching, and of religious service is the making of men. And the man is more than any system, or creed, or ritual.

Religious forms, then, are simply incidental. To make them the essential element is to miss the central point of it all. What doth God require of thee? To do justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God,— to be a certain kind of man, to live a certain kind of life. Temples, ceremonials, litanies, worship, whatever in the systems of religious organization may aid in becoming this kind of a man and in living this kind of a life, claim your allegiance, but only so far as they do contribute to these ends. They do not exist for them-

selves. The most gorgeous ritual and the most solemn ceremonies are as nothing, if, as we leave the altars and face the world's work again, righteousness, and love, and spirituality are not the dominant notes in our life. It is all vanity, this playing at religion, if the great end for which any true religion strives is lost sight of. No man has done what is required of him when he has joined a church, when he attends its stated worship, and when he has contributed to its financial needs. It is only when he is becoming more of a man, truer in his daily life, broader in his human sympathies, more sensitive in his conscience, more alive to the great spiritual forces, that he is meeting the divine demands upon him. Neither church nor creed can take the place of character. Pious sentiment and theological acumen are not of necessity virtues. We judge trees by the fruit on them, not by their leaves, and we judge men by their day-book and ledger, not by their prayers and professions.

Does it seem too simple, this statement of the prophet Micah? It may be simple,— any religion that would be universal must be simple, — but it provides just the moral tonic that the world needs in these days. If ever there was a time when something was needed to develop a higher standard of public and private integrity, that time is now. If ever there was

a day when men needed to be taught the value of the basic virtues, that day is now. Our whole life is eaten with dishonesty and debased by graft. The moral standards by which every man should test his living in public and in private action have become warped and false. The one question which ought to determine the moral quality of our acts and enterprises, the question, Is this thing right? has been elbowed aside by the question, What is there in it for me? The dominant desire of the day seems to be *to have* rather than *to be.* We are given to estimating men by what they have heaped about them, instead of by what they have developed within them. We measure our own success in life, not in terms of character, but in so many square feet of dirt, in so much brick, and mortar, and stone, and stocks, and bonds, and a thousand other things that the grave will strip from us. You cannot measure the value of a man in things. You cannot figure a man's worth anywhere save at the point where he becomes a man. You are worth no more than can be expressed, than *is* expressed, in the qualities that make for manhood.

If the world needs any one thing to-day more than another, it is to lay hold vitally on this simple creed of the prophet Micah; to get it bedded in its conscience that the great God is seeking honest, loving, spiritually minded men,

rather than worshipers, or pietists, or creed-mongers, or theological doctors. And the world needs, too, to revise its own standard of measurement, so that every man shall be rated according to the mind and heart and soul of him, and not by his bank account. The man is what he is, not what he has. Wealth is simply condensed opportunity. Its value lies in its use, not in its possession. To heap up riches is to multiply one's power to affect his community for good or evil. Where power is, there is responsibility. We hear much in these days about tainted money. Money has no moral quality. It cannot be tainted. The most serious thing in our present age is not tainted money, but tainted men, men who secure money through bad means, men who are willing to secure it at the expense of rectitude, mercy, and conscience.

We want a new evangelism, an evangelism that comes down out of the clouds and mists and walks our streets; an evangelism that stops whimpering about some far-off heaven and gets about the daily pursuits of life with healing power! We want a new salvation, a salvation that *saves*, a salvation that takes hold of all that a man has, his business, his home, his politics, and purifies them; a salvation that does not wait for some other life before it is effective; a salvation that is directed toward making

this life the best kind of a life possible in any world. We need a new conception of religion, a conception that does not exhaust itself in seeking adherents to a particular church, or in conformity to a particular creed, but that aims at making God-fearing, humanity-looking, high-minded, right-souled citizens, here and now. We need a religion whose energy and effort are aimed at making men, clean, pure men, whose days and nights can bear the light of investigation; men who dare to live in the open, and who do not sneak behind creeds or crosses to hide their sins or to justify their meannesses; men who do not need to be bribed by offers of heaven before they are willing to be decent on earth; men who live every day in the light of their divine responsibilities. That is the religion we want. It grips hold of human life. It meets us on the plane where men live. It chimes in with the noise of traffic and the hum of industry. There is blood, and bone, and gristle in it. It is full of fine, large strength. It is the sort of a religion that lays hold of the best there is in us. It makes men of us. There is no appeal either to fear or to selfishness. It changes the summons of the old evangelism, "Come, and be saved," and rings out a new summons, "Come, and be men!"

"WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?"

Matt. xxii: 42.

The most pathetic figure of all recorded history is that of Jesus of Nazareth. It is not the poverty and friendlessness of his life that invests it with pathos. There have been many just as poor and just as forsaken as Jesus. It was not the apparent failure of his mission and the slow response of the dull world to his message. Many a preacher has met the same shriveling chill as he has worn out his life for his people. Nor was it the death on the cross, with all its pain and suffering. Many have died on the cross, and there have been multitudes of men who have passed through periods of agony compared with which the anguish of the crucifixion was trivial. None of these things contribute materially to the sorrow of the Son of Man. But to live in the heart of life as a man among men, meeting its temptations with courage and bearing its trials with fortitude, and then to be denied the fruit of the whole hard struggle by being looked upon as a god masquerading in human guise; to walk the dusty

highways of human experience, a common workman traveling afoot through time, overcoming the ills that flesh is heir to, with no help but such as any other son of man might have, and then to see his life robbed of the grandeur of its moral simplicity, that it might be decked out in the tinsel and trappings of theological figment; to glory in his humanness and then to be paraded as the only begotten Son of God; to insist on being the servant of his brethren, and yet to be set on thrones and made to lord it over them as king; to have the sweetness of his kindly religion turned to acid for the branding of heretics; to see the light of his gospel changed to darkness by being overlaid with the thick curtain of an ecclesiastical Christology; to proclaim the free access of all men everywhere to the presence of the Father-God, and then to be made a barred and bolted gateway to the kingdom of heaven; to be compelled to stand for what his soul loathed, and made sponsor for things that were hateful to him; to see the foundations of the simple faith he held and taught perverted into credal barriers, while the emphasis in religion was laid upon things of no moral moment,— this it is which makes the figure of Jesus so profoundly pathetic.

The supreme task of the present age is the rescue of Jesus from the hands of his friends. "What think ye of Christ?" is the question

that is pressing into the consciousness of thoughtful men, who are tired of the quibbling of the schools, and would come out from them all, into the fair open, where they may judge for themselves what manner of man he was, and what he stood for in the world. "Time was," says Professor Foster, "when, at the mention of the name of Jesus, many thought of church doctrine, of Christology, dogma, the old creed, which lay like a veil upon the personality of Jesus; they thought of the veil, of the wrappings woven by speculation, of the deity; of the 'conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary'; of resurrection, descent into hell, ascent into heaven; of a return on the clouds; of miracle upon miracle; of the whole church belief in its massive formation with its materialism and its magic! To-day we live in a world characterized by nothing so much as by the absence of any psychological soil in which these fantasies can find nourishment. If these things constitute the Christian religion, that religion is already an antiquated affair, a relic that is worthless to the cultivated classes." The dogmas about the Christ signify for many of the children of our time a gigantic and gilded tomb for the personality of Jesus and his religion, sealed with stone of orthodoxy, before which the age waits for the sign of the living Master.

Little by little historical criticism has done its work. In no spirit of antagonism to any faith or to any creed, but actuated only by a profound desire for the truth, rather than for a truth, the scholarship of to-day has sifted evidence and weighed testimony, and has given to the world the results of its investigation. With clear vision, unbiased by any preconceived notion, it has pierced the dust and mold of theological accumulation, and has given us a glimpse of the original painting that lay beneath. It has scraped away the false coloring of later ages, by which ecclesiastics attempted to heighten effects with splotches of dogma, and has patiently removed the fictitious overlay of miracle that had fouled the portrait. With reverent fingers criticism is still laboring that men may see Jesus as he was; and if, as the work progresses, one after another of the fictions which have been clustered about the life of Jesus is dispelled and abandoned, yet the luster of his spirit is in nothing dimmed thereby, and he still remains the "light of the world." Jesus the magician has gone, but Jesus the Man grows ever larger on the world's vision.

It is objected that the critical spirit of the age is destructive, that it is bent on tearing down the cherished idols that have long decked the hearthstone of multitudes of good men and

women, leaving them nothing in its place. I am willing to admit that the first charge is well-founded. Criticism must be destructive, first of all. It must clear a broad place and take away the heaps of rubbish, before it can construct anything there. Until quite recently, the work of critical scholarship has been almost wholly negative. But here and there the task of construction has been undertaken, and the building of a positive belief is well under way. As to the second charge, that criticism is hostile to the orthodox faiths and determined to overthrow them, that I do not admit. Criticism knows no creed. It favors none and it fights against none. It seeks for truth. And if, in its search for truth, it finds it necessary to break some long-cherished image around which the thoughts of men have clung, its pity for the ignorance of men cannot stay the hand that severs them from their idols. If we are honest men we cannot ask criticism to limit the field of its research. If what we have long regarded as truth turns out, under the keener inspection of skilled men, to be false, or only partially true, we should be willing to let it go. All we ask of the critic is that he be fair, and that he be gentle. And we should bear in mind also that though our theories concerning facts be changed, and modified and abandoned again and again, the facts themselves are not

altered thereby. And further, however much the findings of the critics may modify our views of Jesus, and correct our wrong impressions of his person and his work, nevertheless he remains, fine and sweet and winsome as ever; and the verdict rendered by Pilate long ago concerning him, is the verdict of the modern critic, "I find no fault in this man."

The attitude of the Unitarian church toward Jesus of Nazareth has been much misunderstood and more often misrepresented. There could scarcely be a slur cast upon our position more false and misleading than the remark frequently made that the "Unitarian Church has in it no place for Jesus." Let it be understood now and for all time that, among all those who are trying to follow the footsteps of the Nazarene, we claim the right to the front rank in the vanguard of the faithful. We hail him as the mightiest leader of men in the moral warfare of life, and we honor him by no specious lip-service, by no cowardly cringing behind his personality in order to escape the just consequences of our sins, but we pay him the homage of lives consecrated to the moral ideals that he sought to realize and to the spirit that burned in the soul of him. It is true that there is no room in the Unitarian Church for the metaphysical Christ of the schools, for the abstract creation of ecclesiasticism, who stands for a

term in a syllogism, a theological formula, a mechanical substitute for human effort; but no creed can reverence more profoundly the sweet reasonableness, the high purposes, and the splendid outlook upon life, the moral grip and the religious temper of this Jewish peasant, who trod the Galilean hills and spent himself in the effort to lead men to righteousness. For the Christ of the scholastics, the majestic figment of Paul and the logicians, the Unitarian Church has little use, but the simple Teacher of the Syrian fisher-folk commands our reverence and our tears. The beauty of his life appeals to a Unitarian as it cannot appeal to any other. It stands forth as an earnest of what the least man of us can become, and an inspiration that nerves us in our struggle with wrong, and injustice, and sin. The victory of this humble Nazarene over himself, his triumph over every mean ambition, his conquering of all that was base and less than his best, without any outside help but such as we too may have, quickens our lagging courage, fires our fainting heart, and sends us forth to the battle again with a brave song on our lips. There is a strength in the character of Jesus for those of us who look upon him as purely human, which is denied to those who regard him as a god in human form. The moment you make Jesus something other than a complete man, the moment you add to

him one solitary equipment that the least soul of us does not and cannot possess, that moment you lift him out of correspondence with human experience and break all vital connection with the race. If Jesus be God coming into our life, clothed with our flesh and blood, as the theologians claim, what does that fact benefit us, who, with no wealth of infinite power to fall back on, must fight the fight with naked fists and take the beatings of the world on our own naked nerve-pulps? What does it matter that God has borne the yoke of human limitation and met the problems of human life? Anyone could do that if he were a God. It does not inspire us to see how a God might live in human form. The perspective of all our problems is altered mightily when there is an affinity of power and wisdom behind them. It is not hard for a God to live like a man, with all the divine resources back of him. That is of little interest to us. But how to live like a God, with only a man's chance in the world, how to be divine in the midst of all the pettiness of daily drudgery, how to hold fast to our integrity in the presence of a thousand insinuating temptations, how to be pure and clean in the center of earth's soiling and defiling influences,— these are the problems that face us, and for which we need to have our souls girded and our spirits strengthened.

There is a tremendous uplift in the thought of Jesus as bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. When we look upon him as a man, not as "mere man," as the orthodox love to taunt us with saying — there is nothing belittling in the expression — when we look upon Jesus as man, stripping off the tawdry raiment of theological speculation and exalting the true divinity of manhood, there is awakened in every human breast a newer and higher ideal of human possibility and we see our common life glorified, with such a splendor at the heart of it that even the trivial and the commonplace are transfigured with a divine beauty. It is man ascending into heavenly places that draws the race after him. The supreme exaltation of humanity is the magnetic force that grips our souls.

To us Unitarians, Christmas is a season of renewed powers and of quickened ideals. It marks the birthday of no God. It stands for the incarnation of no strange and unearthly spirit. We see no heavens opening and hear no chorus of angelic voices hailing the coming of the only-begotten of God. But out of the heart of our common humanity, we welcome one like unto ourselves, who shows us how to live these little lives of ours as a man ought to live them. We see one who stood in the midst of the world, where all the winds of temptation

blew upon him, meeting poverty, and sorrow, and hatred, and misunderstanding, the same old trials that we all have to meet, yet through them all living a sweet, clean, joyful life, and showing us that even in untoward conditions such a life can be lived by every one of us. And as we gaze upon the character of the human Jesus, there comes upon us all the inspiration that is diffused from all great souls, we grip our lives with a fine new strength, we grapple our fate with an unconquerable spirit, and we go on to whatever the days hold for us, with an undimmed faith in the might of our own manhood, as he has revealed it to us.

THE BEST APOLOGETIC

If, a generation or two ago, we had been called upon to give a proof of Christianity, we would have at once appealed to two things upon which the Christian religion was supposed to rest: miracle and prophecy. These were the pillars upon which the faith of men was solidly set, and which could not be moved without destroying the whole structure. It is a poor policy to support the integrity of a system upon what is incidental rather than vital. It necessitates awkward explanations and a rapid shifting of positions when the test comes. In modern thought both miracles and prophecy are absolutely discredited, and Christianity has been compelled to look elsewhere for standing ground.

We are living in a world governed by law, an orderly world, where nothing "walks with aimless feet," but where all things are gripped and held fast by an inexorable law of consequence. For everything that happens there is a reason. There is nothing spasmodic, or causeless, or independent in the universe. Every phenomenon is the result of a cause, and

every cause eventuates in a result. In the balanced system of things there is no room for external interference; no room for the breaking through of a supernatural God to work his will in the world. God is in his world. The working of natural law is the expression of his will. "We may not suppose that there is a twofold activity in God, a natural and a supernatural. Rather, natural law is itself the will of God; in which case it is impossible to see how God beside this will of his could have another will, how anything could happen which did not happen according to law. But belief in the miraculous logically implies that the natural and historical order is not so constituted that all the divine ends admit of being attained thereby. God finds resistance to be overcome in his own moral order. As Höffding says, it is as if there were two Gods, the one operative in the customary course of things, the other correcting in single instances the work of the first. At all events, in such belief we waver hither and thither between God and nature; we seek the help of God only as a stop-gap on occasions when we think that nature cannot serve our purpose, and the result is that we neither feel ourselves at home in nature, nor are we fully at peace with the all-ruling providence of God."

Miracles are the product of a non-scientific

age, and are more valuable as a psychological study than as a historical one. In the early stages of religion they are attributed to devils as well as to saints, and aside from some moral quality which they may show, are absolutely worthless from an evidential standpoint. The distinction between the devils and the Christ is not drawn by the performance of miracles, but rather by the kind of miracles performed — a distinction that required no miraculous accompaniments in order to compel belief. The main question is not whether miracles have been performed, perhaps, but whether they have any standing in court at all, whether they are worth anything as evidence. "Miraculous narratives, like the Biblical, originating from no observer who possessed sufficient knowledge of the relations and laws of nature to have a right to pronounce upon such matters, have no scientific importance. And the orthodox exaction of 'faith' in stories out of relation with everything we know, must be forever no less antagonistic to the high activities of true faith than it is stultifying to science and common sense. An intelligent man who now affirms his faith in such stories as actual facts can hardly know what intellectual honesty means."

Are we discrediting the Bible by thus denying the historic actualities of the miraculous tales in it? Not at all. The Bible does not

stand or fall with the inerrancy of all the things recorded in it. The Bible is not science, or the philosophy of history, or dogmatics or anything else but literature. It does not discredit the book for the purpose it is designed to meet, when we eliminate the incredible — for example, the long day in Joshua's experience, when the sun is said to have stood still for twenty-four hours. It would seem that God was more interested in the killing of the Amorites and their allies than he was in preserving the integrity of his own universe! It is absurd, on the very face of it — as absurd as the silly story that God sent the bears out of the woods to tear forty and two little children who laughed at Elisha because he had gotten his hair cut! I say, it does not discredit the Bible for the purpose for which it was given. It is already discredited for purposes of science. The Bible does not obtain its moral value from the truth of its alleged miracles any more than it gains moral worthlessness from the lechery and moral looseness of many of its recorded saints.

We hold the Bible in reverence not because it has folk-tales and legends mingled with its facts. Miracles do not give it an iota of spiritual potency. It is because we see in the book the great affirmations of moral truths that grip our soul and will not let it go; it is because through it we catch sight of God, walking in the midst

of human life; it is because there comes from it the pulsing of a great Divine Heart, beating against our own; because in its story of human experience, with its temptations, its falls, its longing after God, its moral triumphs, its spiritual unfoldings, we see our own life written down, that the Bible appeals to us with a profound power. It is the something in the book that lies deeper than the letter of it, or the mere story — it is a voice out of the eternities that we hear in it. Not its miracles or its myths, but its moral fiber, lends an undying force to the book. It is not what we find in the Bible, as Coleridge said, that makes it vital and living, but it is that in the Bible which finds us.

Science has shattered our old unquestioning credulity, and has stripped us of our superstitious assent to the incredible in the Bible because of a fictitious reverence we all have for things that are ancient and for things that are "written in a book." But we have come out from under the cloud of superstition stronger and better men and women, because we believe God for what he actually is, and not because of the idle tales and miracles that have been attributed to him. For, as Foster remarks, "What we need in order to see the glory of God is not miracle, but an open eye for the world in which we live. And our deepest needs

and longings, our desire for reconciliation and peace, our thirst after righteousness, life and blessedness — these find their satisfaction more surely when we hear in them the voice of him who has imbedded them in our nature, to reveal his love to us, than when we seek some guarantee outside of us that we dare rely on him, and need fear no illusion. So, too, a human Christ who does no more and no less than interpret to us the eternal revelation of God in human nature, and opens our eyes to see it, is no less adapted to reconcile us and lead us into sonship than the superhuman entity of the church, which, with his epiphany and his performances, has no place in the pale of the natural life of humanity. And the same remark may be made of a human Christianity. Christianity is not miraculous stories — no matter how many or how miraculous they may be — but the spirit of Christ."

Every recorded miracle may be proven to be a legend, devised by those whose anxiety to supplement the natural revelation of God by some puny, outside device led them to minimize the facts of our ordinary experience in the interest of a supernatural fiction, and yet there remains the most potent argument for Christianity that has ever been put forward, or ever can be — the impact of the spirit and life of Jesus on the world. Christianity needs no sup-

port from miracles or prophecies in the face of its own history. It needs no supernatural defense in the light of its own vital spirit. Why should we fly to the flimsy and unreal artifices of the incredible, in our apologetic for the worth of Jesus? Is there not proof enough, proof that can never be overthrown, in the irrefutable facts of Christian civilization? Admit there have been periods of stagnation, admit that for long seasons the world has been smothered under the baneful influence of ecclesiasticism, when the place of Jesus has been usurped by forms and ceremonies and dogmatism, yet whenever the church would purify herself, and put on a new and indomitable strength, she has always come back to the spirit of her Master and has drunk deep at the fountains of his simple gospel. Every fresh impulse toward a vital religious life has taken its rise from the pure springs of his quiet teaching and example. There is but one sure argument for Christianity, and that is not found in miracles or in prophecies, but in the historical effect of it and in its personal experience. One simple soul, spiritually awake, coming forth from the grave of his dead self, standing up in the world, facing its problems with a resolute heart, living his life bravely and sanely and divinely through the inspiration of the spirit that was in Jesus, is worth more than all the miracles and old wives'

fables of all the Bibles. When I have gone down into the belly of hell, and have seen the pitiful wrecks of men lifted into the sunlight of God's grace and made over again into the semblance of his image; when I have seen the bloated, bleareyed waifs of the world coming forth from the graves of their loathsome past and, released from the cerements of their dead manhood, taking their place again as men in the midst of life; when I have seen the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven and resting here and there upon communities, making the desert places of earth glad and beautiful with the beauty of holiness, I do not need you to tell me your puttering tales of swimming ax-heads and water turned into wine, and blind eyes opened and of resurrections; for, behold the miracle of every day, the miracle of divine love working in the hearts of men now and here is better than all your age-old legends and wonder-tales.

Nineteen hundred years ago there stood one in the midst of us like unto ourselves, and spake words of wisdom to the world. It was a world worn out and spent, overlaid with superstition and burdened with the dreary machinery of formal ecclesiasticism. From a feverish and fruitless seeking after the bread of life among the dried and shriveled products of Phariseeism and of vain philosophies, men turned in despair and disgust. With an amazing contrast to the

complex formulas of the religious life of his time, Jesus preached the simple gospel of love: "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." That God is the Father of us all, and that men are all endowed with divine possibilities, this was the simple, but potent, message that he gave to the world. The effect was magical, after the seed had had time to germinate. Christianity spread like a contagion through the world. Then it allied itself with princes and sought to conquer the world by the sword instead of by the spirit, and it became a dead, cold thing of forms and ceremonies. But over and over again, has the church come back to the simple gospel of Jesus, and found therein the springs of a new vitality and the impulse to a fresh energy.

It is a singular fact that Jesus left no writing. Not a single trace of doctrine has ever been penned by him and handed down to the world. The so-called Gospels were written long after his death, and were compiled from memory, with additions and interpolations made in the interests of the theology and of the philosophy that had begun to grow up around his person and his teaching. Probably no gospel was written at all before the letters of Paul had circulated throughout the churches and had influenced more than a little the thought

of the early Christians. There is not a single saying of Jesus that we can know, for an absolute certainty, to be a genuine, literal saying of the Master. And yet, in spite of all these accretions and additions, in spite of the poor, pitiful attempts to bolster up his story with the imported philosophy of his time and with the grotesque tales of miracle and of wonder, there shines forth the splendor of his spirit, pure, serene and unclouded — a spirit that shall ever go before the stumbling feet of men leading them up the shining heights of their celestial possibility.

It is this living spirit of Jesus that the world needs —not his words; they were spoken for his times and for his people. It is his vital grip on the great facts that underlie all our life that we need — the fact of God's fatherly goodness and man's claim to it, the fact of human possibility and the divine emergence of man into it. Whatever beliefs about Jesus men may hold, whatever men may believe or try to believe about his virgin birth, and his miracles and his resurrection — these things are all beside the question and of no particular moment. It is his spirit that counts. "If any man have not the spirit of Christ he is none of his." Whatever else a man may possess in the way of credal assets is of little worth if he be not imbued with the life that was in the man Jesus.

It is the man's attitude toward the sort of life that Jesus lived in the world that determines finally his character. His attitude toward a creed or confession of faith is merely incidental, perhaps accidental. Neither his ecclesiastical connection, nor his confessional affiliation, is any substitute for the positive spirit of Jesus.

When the life of Jesus went out on Calvary a strange thing took place. I do not refer to the stories of his bodily resurrection which are found in the traditions that surround Jesus' life — stories natural enough, perhaps, in the wistful, excited condition of his disciples' minds — but I refer to the breaking forth of his spirit in the life of his followers, at Antioch, and Capernaum and Jerusalem, and in Cæsarea Philippi. Men who had been weak and timid, who dared not own their allegiance to him while he was with them, now stood up and fearlessly met their death for his sake, and the gospel's. If anyone had asked them what it was that inspired them to these acts of courage and of steadfastness, they would have answered in the words of Paul: "I live, yet not I, for Christ liveth in me." And all down the years that have intervened since his forlorn and pitiful death on the Cross, men have caught his spirit and have walked in his ways, and the world has been the better for their living.

The world will never outgrow Jesus. It will

outgrow our doctrines and our dogmas about Jesus. It will cast aside our theories over his words and over his works, but it cannot go beyond the spirit of his teaching. There is nothing higher for men than he has offered them — sonship to God; there is nothing simpler than the method that he has given men to realize that sonship: "This is my commandment, that ye love one another as I have loved you." For when a man loves, he keeps all the law; he can neither lie, nor steal, nor kill, nor bear false witness, nor covet, nor do anything else that is amiss.

With the question of celestial metaphysics I have nothing to do. I am inclined to think that as Unitarians we are too much given to attempt to prove that Jesus was not God, rather than to prove that no sort of life is worth while that falls outside the lines that he laid down for us. With the number of persons in the Godhead we have nothing to do. The speculation is worse than idle. The whole question lies on a plane that is utterly impossible in this later age of scientific research. The sailor guides his ship by a fixed star, and he knows that if he only holds his rudder true, he will make the desired haven. It makes little difference to him whether the telescope resolves that star into a double star or into a group of stars. It guides him home, and that is enough.

How far beyond the little knowledge of men the life of Jesus rises matters little. Whether he be man or whether he be a god, we care not. We know that if we follow him, we shall get home.

"If Jesus Christ is a man,
And only a man, I say
That of all mankind I will cleave to him
And to him will cleave alway.

"If Jesus Christ is a God,
And the only God, I swear
I will follow him through heaven and hell,
And earth and sea and air."

INSPIRATION

It has been unfortunate that the words "inspiration" and "revelation" have been given a theological content. To narrow the idea of inspiration to some abnormal state of the mind in a past age, in which men were acted upon from without by some strange spirit operating outside the realm of natural law, for the express purpose of revealing some dogmatic proposition, or for the purpose of laying down certain specific rules of practice: in short, to confine inspiration to any period of time, or to any set of men, or to any book or books, is to defraud the idea of its due and to divest it of its larger power in and on human life. It is a big word, this word "inspiration," and must be given a definition commensurate with its bigness. There is a mighty truth at the heart of it, which the world cannot afford to lose sight of.

The history of wellnigh all peoples emerges from a haze of vague tradition filled with gleaming bits of a far-off "Golden Age," when all the world was fair and God walked the highways of men, speaking face to face with proph-

ets and patriarchs, seers and saints. Religion often looks back to an ancient day of spiritual communion and supernatural fellowship, long since faded and forever sealed. These were the days when the oracles of God were revealed, when inspired men wrote the sacred scriptures that should be for all time. But science is a sad iconoclast. Plodding back through the centuries, Research finds that the "Golden Age," like the rainbow's foot, recedes as we approach it and finally vanishes into thin air. The royal highway of tradition, that seemed to sweep past the majestic palace of some great-souled patriarch, where, in regal splendor and crowned with a halo of sanctity, some Father of the Faithful shed the mild effulgence of a life of holiness upon the people, dwindles, as we follow it, into a tortuous cattle-path, that twists across the hills to the dusty tents of a Bedouin sheik, whose morals are as doubtful as the myths that have gathered about his person. We dream of the prophets, and in our visions they take strange shape before us, the form of unearthly spirits, cloistered from the world's tumult and confusion, there in the weird solitude-stillness listening to the Voice of the Lord as he spake his word in their ear, gazing in ecstatic trance upon the scroll of the future sealed to duller eyes, or penning the message of the Almighty to men of distant ages, as some

angelic visitant, the herald of the Infinite, leaned across their trembling bodies and bade them write. But when the inexorable fingers of Fact lift the veil of Fancy, the glory fades from the mount of transfiguration, and instead of splendid creatures, too unearthly to be men and yet too human to be gods, we see a humble shepherd, finding his message among his flocks and herds, a plowman digging truth from the heart of God's earth, or a wide-eyed man reading the word of the Lord in the faces of his brethren on the street.

Inspiration is not the coming of a new Spirit into the affairs of men. It is not the breaking of the orderly and natural way of doing things, by an external, supernatural, transcendent God, to reveal himself and his truth to men by erratic and abnormal means. It is just the perception of the eternal Spirit of Truth, which has been in the world from the beginning. There is a true light, which lighteth every man coming into the world. Not all men see it. But to them to whom the vision appears, it comes through no strange process, but by the unfolding of the moral and rational perception. Inspiration is a thing of spiritual and intellectual insight. It is having eyes to see and ears to hear what is going on in God's world. The inspired man is the man with mind and soul great enough and crystal-clear enough to

see beyond the little catch-penny world that we create out of our selfishness and materialism into the awful truth of things. It is of small moment what kind of truth it is that he sees. It is all God's truth; and the man who finds a bit of it somewhere, and opens his life to it; who takes his little fragment of divine news and tries to tell it honestly to his brethren, is one of the inspired prophets of the Almighty. It may be an Isaiah, reading God's message in the faces of men or spelling out a divine word from the confused voices of his age; it may be a Scottish plowboy, with the poet's soul, uprooting a mountain daisy as he lays off the furrow, finding a gospel tangled in the torn roots of the flower and singing an immortal song about it; it may be the lad who hears God's whisper in the steam as he listens to the kettle crooning its old-fashioned melody as it swings on the sooty crane, or the grimy mechanic who sees in the midst of clanging hammers and whirring spindles and hissing valves a vision of some device that shall cheapen necessities and make life more tolerable for earth's millions; it may be the patient thinker, in the hush of his study, forging upon the anvil of logic a great thought that shall make men better and the world a holier place,— all, all are inspired men and the instruments of God's Spirit of Wisdom.

For inspiration is independent of the kind

of truth perceived or revealed. There is no warrant for filching the halo from any truth. All truth is divine, though not all truth is ecclesiastical or biblical. To run lines of cleavage, splitting God's truth in twain, calling this secular and that divine, is both a violation of fundamental fact and intellectual treason against the moral order of the universe. There is no room for the secular in a world so full of God.

Further, inspiration is not the sacred monopoly of any literature or of any corporation. It is the heritage of the race. Galileo, Copernicus, Kepler, and the long list of those who have been peering into the mysteries of Nature, are as truly inspired men as Moses, or David, or Isaiah. The true poets are also true prophets, and the artists and musicians who are seeking to utter their visions of beauty or to express in rhythmic harmonies the melodies that are singing in their souls, are ministers of the One Universal Spirit, whom men call God. More than this, the humble soul that is living its bit of a life under the spell of some dream of a higher truth of things, living its little days grandly, bringing into the pettiness of its opportunity and the monotony of its treadmill routine some fragment of a divine largeness and dignity, is a soul more truly inspired than any weird, unearthly being that mumbles its broken

ecstasies in some solitary cloister, or, half-mad with prayer and fasting, seeks a message from the Almighty in the desert waste or upon the silent peaks of the mountains. The God-seeker, if he would surely find him, must not shut himself away from the pulsing heart of our common life. Believe me, God is more certainly to be found in the busy haunts of men, in the places where the work of the world goes on, in the midst of the dust and tears and strife, the failures and successes, the hopes and fears and disappointments and joys that make up the life of earth's children, in the homes and schools and shops and streets of our cities,—here, I say, God is more certainly to be found than in all the Bibles, and in all the shrines and temples. Here, where the multiform life of the world is lived, is the place to go God-seeking.

For long the thought has dominated the world that inspired truth has found its way in the earth only through the lips of a certain few men in the distant past, and is now forever sealed within the covers of a sacred book; that here and there a soul became the vehicle through which the Almighty uttered his Word to men, and, when the lips of the speaker had crumbled to dust and the age of the Prophets had ended, God was too poor in resources or too niggard of his truth to speak again to the groping

children of men. So there came to be a theory of a closed deposit of divine revelation, a system of faith "once for all delivered to the saints," a bundle of little pamphlets containing the sole treasury of divine truth, hidden away in the midst of a single people, while the myriad hosts that swarm the earth reel on to the awful brink of life without the knowledge necessary to their soul's salvation. We have been asked to believe in a God who is less than just, a God whose character and acts would not bear the moral tests of even our imperfect lives. It is all wrong, pitifully wrong. Surely God must be better than the best we know, and the soul of a good man has no room in it for hate, for jealousy, for revenge, for partiality, for brutal vindictiveness or cruel indifference.

The world is full of religions. All down the ages men have gone looking for God. And they have found him, each in his own way. The roads are many, but they all lead to the One God. By what right, then, do we seize our theological bludgeons and invading the sanctities — rude sanctities, perhaps — of those worshipers who try to body their conceptions of the Power behind it all in images and idols, ruthlessly shatter into bits that which is sacred in their eyes? Were it not wiser, yea, were it not nearer the truth, to look upon these crude, distorted figures as symbols of a

people's longing after the Infinite Soul of Things, as signs of a people's best endeavors to think upward, and that it is all a step, a divine step, in the evolution of a perfected manhood? If we were wiser still, I think we would put off our shoes from our feet even in the presence of a heathen's god of stone, for we are standing in a people's "Holy of Holies," and in laying our hand upon yon graven image we are touching a fragment of the living God, and our eyes, as we gaze upon it, are looking upon a bit of divine inspiration.

In thinking upon these various religions, we must continually correct our findings by one important consideration, viz., that *religions have no value in themselves.* Their worth is commensurate with their moral efficiency. That religion is best which makes the best men. The value of a religion lies neither in its forms, its sacred literature or its organization, but in its moral dynamic. If we admit that the religion of Jesus is the finest type of religion thus far produced in the evolution of the race, yet we must not think that it is the only religion worthy of a man's thought, or even the only divinely inspired religion. The processes of development, whether of worlds or men, do not move forward abreast of each other, like well-drilled troops. The heavens show us to-day all stages of world-life, from the birth of planets

out of nebulous haze and star-dust through molten orbs and whirling sphere to those dead globes whose icy corpses are still flung along the paths in which they once had burned and glowed. Likewise do we find in the earth today the various steps by which the mind and soul of man has climbed from savagery to civilization. The religions of men keep pace with their growing spiritual capacities. With an infinite patience, the Power that is working silently at the heart of things leads the stumbling feet of the peoples of earth toward the stature of perfect manhood. Some move faster than others, but all move toward the same "far-off, divine event," and all are quickened by the same Spirit. We are all of us God's wandering children, trying to find our way to the Father's House. Some of us think we catch clearer glimpses of the way, but let us take heed how we despise our brethren of slower insight, who stagger along in the dark of superstition, or who, hungry for a vision of the God they cannot see, but dream of, make for themselves crude symbols of him out of dumb stone,— the mute alphabet by which the wistful heart spells out a gospel for its comfort and its hope. By devious ways the soul of man has followed the footprints of the Almighty to and fro in the earth. And if, by crooked, halting paths some of God's little ones have gone crying after

him, who are we, to lay our curse upon them because they follow not with us?

" Bowing thyself in dust before a Book,
And thinking the great God is thine alone,
O rash iconoclast, thou wilt not brook
What gods the heathen carves in wood and stone;
As if the Shepherd who from outer cold
Leads all his shivering lambs to one sure fold
Were careful of the fashion of his crook."

All religions have in them the seeds of divine truth, and for their time and for their people they are divine forces, divine inspirations. I do not maintain that one is as good as another. Each is to be rated according to its lifting capacity. All have their place in the moral evolution of the race. The great end of religion is the same, no matter what form it may assume. In the development of a fine, true manhood, God is using all religions and all bibles. Neither divineness nor inspiration can be denied any one of them that is tugging to lift the people who hold it a little higher in their conception of things. All of them are reaching out after the same God. It makes little difference by what name they call him. Great facts are indifferent to the labels we put on them. God is not baptized into any form of faith. No time or people can persuade the Almighty to take up his exclusive abode in its literature or

in its ecclesiastical corporation. The true inspiration does not lie in a book written for all time, or in a society organized for all time, but in the living souls of the living men of any time. God's inspired book is never finished. It is not penned on parchment in a tongue that is dead, or graven on stone. It is a Book of Life, and the words are spelled out of the flesh and blood of men.

> " Slowly the Bible of the race is writ,
> And not on paper leaves or leaves of stone;
> Each age, each kindred, adds a verse to it,
> Texts of despair or hope, or joy or moan."

The true inspiration is the anointing with insight that touches the eyes of them that love the Truth, and watch eagerly for her coming. It is a vision of the verities of which all Nature is but the symbol and all life but an opportunity for utterance. The inspired man is only the man whose soul has been tuned to the Infinite. He is the *seer*, the man who sees, and whether the truth he sees is a gleam of light through science, or economics, or politics, or business, or any one of the many sides of life, it is a bit of the One Eternal Truth shining out of different windows. Truth is all one, but the eye that apprehends it varies.

But I must not linger here. I wish to say a word about the way in which men are inspired.

Sometimes inspiration seems to be the work of a mighty Spirit pressing down upon the souls and minds of a whole generation of men. We speak of the "Spirit of the Age." It is no idle phrase. Over and over again has the world felt upon it the touch of a power not itself making for some great end. Over and over again there has swept through the heart of the race a strange impulse that has lifted it like a tide and borne it toward some divine achievement. No man has known whence it came. Like the wind which bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof but canst not tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth, so is everyone that is born of this Spirit. We only know that it is here. We are under the spell of it. It commands, and we run to do its bidding.

Sometimes the inspiration comes through a great ideal. Men have dreamed dreams and have seen visions in the deeps of their soul's solitude, and have gone forth glorified to fashion the day's work after the pattern that was showed them in the mount. Over every mighty task there hovers an ideal, none the less real because the dull eyes of the multitude do not see it. Over every picture that Raphael painted, over every marble that Angelo chiseled, over every composition of Beethoven, there floated the ideal, the beautiful, beckoning ideal, calling

them to bring all the powers of soul and mind and technical skill into her service. Raphael's "Madonna," Angelo's "Moses," and Beethoven's "Ninth Symphony" are just the attempt to catch this ideal in color, to utter it in marble or to voice it in music. The ideal was not the creation of these men, it was their vision.

So, too, with ideas. A great thought flames in the mind of the little Monk of Wittenberg, and the world catches fire. A passion sweeps through the soul of an obscure citizen, and a great idea shapes itself there in the turmoil of his spirit. The man perished miserably, but the idea marched through the land, breaking the shackles from a race of slaves. Thought is contagious. There is no power among men mightier than that developed by an epidemic of ideas.

Probably the commonest way in which men are inspired is by the touch of a great personality upon their lives. There are souls whose native air seems to be on the heights, souls to whom life is a thing intensely human, yet filled with a fine, sweet seriousness and a divine nobility. These souls are wonderfully alive, yet, perhaps, as wonderfully quiet. They are instinct with a marvelous potentiality. Their smile is a benediction and their very presence is an uplift. They pass through the world as springtime passes through the earth, leav-

ing in their path a thousand virtues which have wakened into life in souls their own earnest, vital strength has touched. Here and there such spirits come to us, all aglow with the flame of a holier, truer manhood or womanhood, and there rises up to meet them all that is best in us, and, presently, we too are burning with the same holy fire. I think it was something like this which constituted the winsomeness of Jesus of Nazareth,— not some strange thing which separates him from the least of us, but that sweet humanness, strong, sane, wholesome, which, while it rises so high and white and clean over against our own life, yet draws us to itself because we see in it our own selves writ large.

Down in the black ooze of a sluggish pond is buried a rough, misshapen root-stock. It has lain there long and has added only a few straggling fibers to its growth. Day by day the great sun hangs over it and woos it. On a glad morning in summer, a shaft of light trembles down through the still water. It kisses the root-stock with a kiss of life-giving power, and, lo, where the lips of the sunbeam were pressed there springs up a bit of green. Little by little it reaches up through the blue, till, by and by, there comes a day when, between its round, flat, floating leaves there bursts forth a flower of wondrous purity, whose golden heart is always turned toward the sun that gave it life. Then

the root-stock that had lain so long half-buried in the mire looks up at the glory that has sprung forth from itself, and catches the thrill of a new hope. The snowy blossom that floats above its unsightliness reveals a possibility it had never dreamed of. All these days had the sun kissed it, and it had not known what power was being poured upon it. Now the doors of life fly open. It sees a prophecy of things almost incredible. There stirs within it the might of a new spirit. It reaches up to the sunbeams. It drinks in the wine of life that comes flooding down from above. It grows and rises in the hope and prophecy that all its life shall one day be uttered in terms of this ideal that blooms above it and pervades the very air with its matchless perfume. So does the life of Jesus, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, touch our souls with its strong inspiration. We see in him our own manhood lifting itself above all sordid meanness and wrong. We see the possibility that opens before the least man of us. We stand upon our feet. We stretch ourselves toward the fullness of a man's stature. The awful thrill of a new ideal and a new inspiration quivers in our spirit. We see how much life means, and feel that to be a man is little less than being a god, and in the strength of this living ideal we push out from the old root-stock and begin to live as divine men ought

to live. Such is the influence of the Carpenter-Christ. Such is the influence, the inspirational power, in varying degree, of every true, manly life in the world. In fact, the only terms in which we can measure the worth to the world of any man's living are the terms of its inspirational force. The real bigness of the soul cannot be measured by its mere absorptive capacity. It is not so much the amount we learn as the amount we teach that gives our life potency. Spiritual culture is not an equivalent for spiritual quickening-power. It is fine to be inspired, it is finer to be an inspiration. Life, whether individual or social, gets its constructive worth from its moral dynamic. This is as true of a church as of a man.

In the Chapel of the Holy Sepulchre, at Jerusalem, there takes place at Easter time, a strange and impressive service. It is midnight, and dense crowds of worshipers are packed in the little church and in the streets leading to it. Within all is dark, silent, solemn. The hours pass, and the crowds wait. For what? The High Priest has entered the rocky tomb where Jesus is said to have been laid, and, it is said, that at midnight a mysterious fire appears in the heart of the sepulchre, from which the priest lights a torch which he has taken with him into the tomb. The hour strikes. In the oppressive stillness, the thick darkness is suddenly

pierced by a flickering ray from the mouth of the grave. A blazing torch is handed out, and passed eagerly to the hands of the breathless watchers. Now we see what the darkness had hidden from us. Every man has his torch with him, and he lights it there at the sacred fire. Then out through the streets of the city they go, each man kindling his neighbor's torch, as he meets him in the way, till presently all Jerusalem gleams with fire, the fire that was found in the holy place. It is a plain parable. Need I apply it?

THE DREAMERS

I HAVE been reading again recently certain passages from a little book of Ruskin's, a book rarely found in the ordinary collections of his works,—"The Harbours of England," published in 1856. In the initial chapter he tells us how his wonder is excited by the bow of a boat, the "blunt head of a common, undecked sea-boat, lying aside in its furrow of beach sand. . . . That rude simplicity of bent plank, that can breast its way through the death that is in the deep sea, has in it the soul of shipping. Beyond this, we may have more work, more men, more money; we cannot have more miracle. . . .

"The man who made it knew not that he was making anything beautiful, as he bent its planks into those mysterious, ever-changing curves. . . . He leaves it when all is done, without a boast. It is simple work, but it will keep out water. And every plank is a Fate, and has men's lives wreathed in the knots of it, as the cloth-yard shaft had their deaths in its plumes."

As we read on in the chapter we fall upon this passage: "I doubt if ever academic grove were half so fit for profitable meditation as the

little strip of shingle between two, black, steep, overhanging sides of stranded fishing-boats. The clear, heavy water-edge of ocean rising and falling close to their bows, in that unaccountable way which the sea always has in calm weather, turning the pebbles over and over as if with a rake, to look for something, and then stopping a moment down at the bottom of the bank, and coming up again with a little run and clash, throwing a foot's depth of salt crystal in an instant between you and the round stone you are going to take in your hand; sighing all the while as if it would infinitely rather be doing something else. And the dark flanks of the fishing-boats all aslope above, in their shining quietness, hot in the morning sun, rusty and seamed with square patches of plank nailed over their rents; just enough to let the little, flat-footed fisher-children haul or twist themselves up to the gunwales, and drop back again along some stray rope; just round enough to remind us, in their broad and gradual curves, of the sweep of the green surges they know so well, and of the hours when those old sides of seared timber, all ashine with the sea, plunge and dip into the green purity of the mounded waves more joyfully than a deer lies down among the grasses of spring, the soft white clouds of foam opening momentarily at the bows, and fading or flying high into the breeze

where the sea-gulls toss and shriek the joy and beauty of it, all the while, so mingled with the sense of unfathomable danger, and the human effort and sorrow going on perpetually from age to age, waves rolling forever and winds moaning forever, and faithful hearts trusting and sickening forever, and brave lives dashed away about the rattling beach like weeds forever; and still at the helm of every lonely boat, through the starless night and hopeless dawn, His hand, who spread the fisher's net over the dust of the Sidonian palaces, and gave into the fisher's hand the keys of the kingdom of heaven."

Or, go on a bit farther till we come to where he speaks of the homely ships that wear out their lives in the humble carrying trade of the day, in the dull, prosaic, but necessary traffic that ministers to human wants. "I respect in the merchant service," he says, "only those ships that carry coals, herrings, salt, timber, iron and such commodities, and that have disagreeable odor, and unwashed decks. But there are few things more impressive to me than one of these ships lying up against some lonely quay in a black sea-fog, with the furrow traced under its tawny keel far in the harbor slime. The noble misery there is in it, the might of its rent and strained unseemliness, its wave-worn melancholy, resting there for a little while in the comfortless ebb, unpitied,

and claiming no pity; still less honored, least of all conscious of any claim to honor; casting and craning by due balance whatever is in its hold up to the pier, in quiet truth of time; spinning of wheel, and slackening of rope, and swinging of spade, in as accurate cadence as a waltz music; one or two of its crew perhaps away forward, a hungry boy and yelping dog eagerly interested in something from which a dull blue smoke rises out of pot or pan; but dark-browed and silent, their limbs slack, like the ropes above them, entangled as they are in those inextricable meshes about the patched knots and heaps of ill-reefed sable sail. What a majestic sense of service in all that languor! the rest of human limbs and hearts, at utter need, not in sweet meadows or soft air, but in harbor slime and biting fog; so drawing their breath once more to go out again, without lament, from between the two skeletons of pier-heads, vocal with the wash of the under-wave, into the gray troughs of tumbling brine; there, as they can, with slacked rope, and patched sail, and leaky hull, again to roll and stagger far away amid the wind and salt sleet, from dawn to dusk and dusk to dawn, winning day by day their daily bread; and for last reward, when their old hands, some winter night, lose feeling along the frozen ropes, and their old eyes miss the mark of the lighthouse

quenched in foam, to so-long impossible Rest, that shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more — their eyes and mouths filled with the brown sea-sand."

What is it in these words of Ruskin that grips the heart-strings and wrings from even the careless soul a sense of sympathy for the restless toilers of the deep? It is not the subtle charm of his diction, though that runs smooth and limpid as a woodland burn, nor is it the pleasing rhythm of the language, that falls upon the ear like the tinkling of silver bells. Rather it is the magic of his poetic gift, which touches with enchanted wand the unseeing eyes of our imagination, and wakes the slumbering god of fancy, till we, too, gaze upon the common world with something of the poet's outlook, and find, to our surprise, like the prophet of olden time, that even amid the ruck and confusion and rubbish of human life, there lingers a divine glory, only our eyes were holden that we saw it not.

No one, having listened to Ruskin, can ever look upon the crudest product of the boat-builder's handicraft, without seeing in the blunt bow and rough sides something of the human tragedy and human joy they mutely stand for. All the gamut of human experience can be heard in the wind that whistles through the rude rigging; the heart-ache, the disappointment, the bitterness of life; its sacrifices and accomplish-

ments; its failures and successes. The roar of the sea-fight, the sob of widowhood as the waves part to receive the shotted shroud of the dead; the song of the sailor lad and the welcoming hail that marks the end of the long run; and love, and home, and happiness are all recorded there on the briny hull of each sea-faring craft. But, for most of us, the clumsy hulk has little meaning, till some poet, or dreamer, with the far-seeing vision, spells out for us the meaning of the commonplace. It is only a boat, and a bit of beach, and an uncouth sailor in the shrouds, till the dreamer wakes us, and through his clairvoyant eyes we see no longer a boat, and a bit of beach, and a sailor-lad, but symbols and signs of human destiny.

We live in an age that prides itself on being unpoetic and that insists on what it terms "facts." And what are facts, but just bits of truth which it has broken off and gathered into heaps and bundles? We are fed with them till our soul is sick, and we feel as did Whitman: —

"When I heard the learned astronomer,
When the proofs, the figures were ranged in columns before me,
When I was shown the charts and diagrams, to add, divide, and measure them,
When I sitting heard the astronomer where he lectured with much applause in the lecture-room,
How soon unaccountable I became tired and sick,

Till rising, and gliding out, I wandered off by myself,
In the mystical moist night-air, and from time to time
Looked up in perfect silence at the stars."

There is a sublime impatience of the soul with the dry husks of things which men measure out to us. Facts are stubborn things, it is said. Yes, and they are dull, isolated things, till some man with the vision has taken them and interpreted them in terms of life. "Give us facts!" cries the world, but the man who knows how to pray aright amends this petition, and cries, "Nay, not facts, but the *meaning* of facts, the larger truth for which these fragmentary facts stand." The most ardent delver in the soil cannot by his searching find out the God of Things, nor can the scanner of the heavens spy out his throne. Only those to whom Nature is a vast metaphor, a divine hieroglyphic, catch glimpses of the nameless Soul of Things behind it all.

The world can never get on without its dreamers. This present time plumes itself on being "practical," and allots small room for the imagination in its philosophy of life. But a philosophy without imagination is like a house without windows, and all the virtues that dwell therein become mildewed and moldy. It is not

the actual, but the ideal, that attracts us. It is only because we dream, and live in the midst of our dreams, that life is tolerable for any of us. It is the world that Hope creates and Imagination gilds with a golden glory that lures us on when our feet falter from weariness and our heart faints under the burden of living. Rob us of our poetry, and you have made life stale, flat and unprofitable. It is a sorry day for any man when he has lost the poetic instinct out of his life, or has allowed his imaginative faculty to shrivel and die; when he sees only *things*, so much stuff and material, to be multiplied and transmuted,— not into some higher form,— but into more material and more stuff; when, out of the multitudinous experiences out of which life is made, out of the buying and selling and eating and drinking, there emerges no glimpse of a larger purpose, no vision of the meaning that gives to life its dignity and significance.

In the heart of every age is hidden away a little handful of leaven. It is made up of those great souls, of those simple, crystal-clear souls, whose vision has stretched away beyond the narrow limits of its time and rested on the gleaming turrets of a world to be, a world of better and braver men and women. Each generation has brought forth its seers, who, in the midst of the noises and confusions of life,

"Saw distant gates of Eden gleam,
And did not dream it was a dream."

They trumpeted their message in the heavy ears of their day, and passed unhonored into the eternal silence, but the living word that they spake, the vision they declared, the dream they published to the world, survives them and comes forth one day in the form of an institution.

It is the dreamer who furnishes the world with its most potential forces. It is ideals, not facts, aspirations, not accomplishments, that are the dynamic motive of the world. It is the dreamer, who catches a sight of some clear principle that we need to know, and grips us lesser men and holds us steady to the truth of it, till we see it and make it our own, who furnishes the lifting power in human life. Every great inspiration is born of a great vision. Dreams alone cannot build a world. There must be practical, hard-headed, unimaginative workers, but the dream comes first. Fancy must precede fact, art must antedate action. Architecture, painting, music, sculpture, governments, inventions, exist because men have dreamed. They saw the temple shining in the sun, and they builded its towers out of splendid thought before the sound of the hammer and mallet was heard, and the stone still lay undug in the quarry. They heard the sound of singing and

the crash of chords in the deeps of their own soul, before the melody or the harmony had assumed a visible form. They saw a State lifting itself proudly in the land, clothed with sovereign power, and cities filled with prosperous people, while as yet the desert spread its unbroken solitude, and the voice of the pioneer had not yet disturbed the solemn stillness of the mountains. What names are counted among the dreamers! Abraham, and Moses, and Jesus, and Paul; Galileo, and Copernicus, and Newton, and Kepler; Columbus, and the Pilgrims, and Washington, and Lincoln; and the long list of those who in all ages and in all climes looked out upon this troubled life of ours, and saw amid the riot and the restlessness,

> "the hands
> That reach through Nature, moulding men."

The deeds of men are for time, but the dreams of men are immortal. The gnawing tooth of Time consumes the proudest monuments which men have reared, and the dust of an irresistible oblivion covers them with its impartial mantle. But great thoughts are ageless and live on in the ideals of the race.

> "Whether on the mart,
> Or on the Heliconian hills apart,
> Toil at thy temples builded in the sky.
> Dreams are in sooth, the only verity."

Hail, then, to the seer and dreamer of dreams, who have discounted the pangs of time, and, faithful to the heavenly vision, have dared to be true to their sublime conceptions, in the midst of an unseeing world.

A TRANSPARENT WORLD

I KNEW a boy, years and years ago, who lived in a cottage on the bank of the blue St. Lawrence, and saw wonderful visions as he gazed out across the restless waters, and heard strange voices calling to him from the rolling river. At night, before he was tucked into his little bed, he would stand for a moment by the open window, and, stretching out his chubby arms toward a great star that swung above him in the dusky heavens, would bid it "good night" and then snuggle down to sleep, feeling that no harm could come to him, for was not the star, *his* star, he called it, keeping watch above his pillow? When the dawn stole into his tiny room, and the blue eyes opened again on the beautiful world, he would talk with the sunbeam that danced along the wall, and hold converse with the roses that looked in at the casement. For all things were alive to him, and a spirit whose language he could understand whispered its messages in every experience that made up the boy's bit of a world. But the mother was troubled. She could not understand, for the years had disillusioned her, as

they have since disillusioned him, and a glory has gone from earth and sky which comes not back again. To the child there is no distinction between heaven and earth, and the sharp line which we draw between the world of spiritual realities and the world of harsh and barren fact does not exist for him.

"Heaven lies about us in our infancy,"

sang the poet. What we call the imagination of childhood is, perhaps, only a keener insight into the meaning of things, which the labored reasoning of later years has served but to cloud and obscure. To the open eye of the child, life is a transfigured thing. The world is luminous and vital. He prattles to the stones and babbles his baby confidences to the trees and flowers, as if they were his chums and comrades, eager to share the griefs and joys of his own little heart and all bound together by a spirit of mothering love. There is no fear and no evil in the love-world of the child. I think I can understand somewhat the deep meaning that lies in the words of him who loved the wee folk, when he said: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye change back again, and become as little children, ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven." He was not talking about a place. The kingdom of heaven, to him, was an ever-present reality, and, because it was a spiritual

reality, they alone could enter it and become partakers of its life, whose clear vision could see through the varied forms of things and detect the spirit that was trying to utter itself in material shape. I think that Jesus was endeavoring to make plain to us that we are living in a transparent world, and that if we would only forget our philosophies, and our formal religions, and our science and our nescience, which lie like a veil upon our eyes, and become simple and honest in our approach to life, as do the children, we would see

> "Earth crammed with heaven
> And every common bush afire with God."

But we walk through the world, most of us, leaden footed and heavy-eyed, missing the meaning of it all, the joy and uplift that are sweeping through it all, with eyes that see no glory and ears that are deaf to a thousand messages that come singing from the sea, and murmuring down from the mountain-tops, and whispering in every wind.

We are held fast by the material aspect of things, which, by its very nearness and obtrusiveness, forces itself upon our attention, shutting out the real world of spirit that lies back of it. All that we see, or hear, or touch, all that we apprehend by our senses, is only the visible utterance of a reality, unseen by our

mental vision, but clear to the spirit that is in us, which is trying to utter itself in tangible form. Lowell has put the thought in words of matchless beauty in his "Vision of Sir Launfal":

"And what so rare as a day in June?
Then, if ever, come perfect days;
Then Heaven tries the earth if it be in tune,
And over it softly her warm ear lays:
Whether we look or whether we listen,
We hear life murmur, or see it glisten;
Every clod feels a stir of might,
An instinct within it that reaches and towers,
And, groping blindly above it for light,
Climbs to a soul in grass and flowers."

The great brown earth lies there in the sunshine, seemingly a vast heap of inert matter. Then forth from it push the lance-like blades of grass, and the little green banners of the flowers are hung swaying in the summer winds. Down in the soft mold something is at work in the darkness, seizing the lifeless clod and translating it into a revelation of beauty; something is reaching up a strange negative to the sunlight, and is printing its own likeness in color. And we see the leaf, and smell the odor of the blossom, and forget the unseen something that

"reaches and towers,
And climbs to a soul in grass and the flowers."

All visible organisms are built by their invisible residents, not for them. The hidden Life, animal, human, or divine, is ever carving its own animated statues. The visible universe is but a vast metaphor, through which spiritual truth may be read. The material creation is but the recorded attempt of the spirit-world to actualize itself to our senses. For there are two worlds, a seen and an unseen, and one is but the halting, stammering utterance of the other. But to those who have eyes to see, the material world is transparent, and through it they catch glimpses of the real world of which it is only an expression.

> "To him who in the love of Nature holds
> Communion with her visible forms, she speaks
> A various language,"

sang one of our own poets. But the speech is strange to most of us, and the message is swallowed up in the noise and riot of the material and sense world. It is only the poets, and the children, who hear the Voice speaking in the Garden in the cool of the day. As one has written: "The mute eloquence of Nature around us is often most pathetic; the beauty that is everywhere taking crude shapes, trying to find expression. Sometimes this pathos is made audible through sweet, half-developed voices. Waters murmur; winds whisper and

moan; grass and blossom and leafy bough sigh back to each other, like children who cannot tell what they want. The dumb rock tries to write out its message with hieroglyphic lichens. Sea-moss and ferns conceal mystical secrets beneath their spreading fronds. The lowest forms of matter are overflowing with significance. Even the slimy ooze of the lake and the black coal in the mine hold an essence of purity within them that nourishes the white life of the lily and kindles the sparkle of the diamond. Nothing is so dead that it does not seek utterance, — that it does not strive to blend itself with some unattainable perfection above itself." The silent unfolding of Nature in flower and tree, the noiseless shifting of the skies, the voiceless glories of dawn and sunset, the ceaseless flow of the unseen Life that is ever making dumb signs to us out of the earth, as if charged with some mighty secret that it would fain make known to us, some hidden pass-word of the Great that it is trying to spell out to our dull vision,— all this is but the quiet revelation of a truth that lies too deep for human speech. Nature is silent only because we do not understand her language, and our ears are heavy and untuned to her myriad voices. In the intonations of the wind, the colors and odors of flowers, the changeful suffusion of sunset tints, or the musical droppings of twilight dews; in

the stillness of the night when darkness mothers the earth and croons her lullabies to the sleeping world, in the shimmer of light with which the stars jewel the sea, in storm and in sunshine, in life and in death, she writes God's word before our stupid eyes, but, alas, most of us see nothing but weeds and patches of color and a few shreds of tattered cloud, that carry in them no eternal meaning and no living message for our souls.

To look upon the world of men and things as a revelation of the unseen, to find behind every appearance the quivering soul that animates it, to press back of the stammering utterance to the spirit that speaks through all phenomena,— this is to find the secret of life, it is to enter the kingdom of heaven. To pierce through the mask of things and see the real that stands there waiting to be known, is to

"Correct the portrait by the living face;"

is to catch glimpses of

"The Vision whereunto
In joy, with pantings, from afar
Through sound and odor, form and hue,
And mind and clay, and worm and star —
Now touching goal, now backward hurled —
Toils the indomitable world."

"The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handiwork. Day unto

day uttereth speech and night unto night sheweth knowledge." The world is transfigured to him who sees it as the trailing vestments of an unseen life, and all matter becomes eloquent to him who finds it forever "haunted by the eternal Mind." Said William Blake: "When the sun rises I see — not a round disc of fire — but an innumerable company of the heavenly host, crying, 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty.'" Another writes, "It is only a fulfillment of the deepest prophesyings of renovated souls — prophesyings that the poet and the artist utter in broken speech — when the Divine Revealers show us a spiritual world that transcends the natural: a world of forms and substances so much nearer in degree to spirit that they pulsate with its life and breathe with its fragrancy, and put on robes chromatic with all its beauty, and quick with the rustlings of its love; a world of subjective scenery, on which ever lies the sweet morning-light of subjective peace; a world therefore whose leaf can never wither and whose flower never fade, because it wears the coloring of souls that are flooded with life everlasting." Was it not Mrs. Browning who wrote, with the poet's insight:

"That not a natural flower can grow on earth,
Without a flower upon the spiritual side,
Substantial, archetypal, all aglow
With blossoming causes,— not so far away

That we, whose spirit-sense is somewhat cleared,
May not catch something of the bloom and breath,
Too vaguely apprehended, though indeed
Still apprehended, consciously or not.

When we have understood where, in this tangled maze of things, the real world actually lies; when we have paused for a little, amid the confusion and dust of daily drudgery, to let the divine glory ray out from even the commonplaces of life; we shall be more careful for the qualities of things than for the quantities of them. The world will grow transparent and luminous as the spirit pricks through the mask, which we, by our blindness, have forced Nature to draw across her face, and we shall dwell in heaven even while earth holds us to her breast. The soul that endures as seeing the invisible has already begun to live in the eternities, and the passing of such a soul will be attended by no abrupt changes, but peacefully and quietly, as the day shades softly into the night, will earth and heaven blend into one.

"The sunset ebbs down the mountain slopes, and village and wilderness fall asleep quietly side by side. Twilight touches all growths with its chrismal dews. Night softly mothers the earth, revealing to us our near and glorious companionship of stars, and leaving us to float away with them through the solitudes of heaven. Home-lights twinkle up from the darkness be-

low with a radiance indistinguishable from the light of stars. Lifted into the overbrooding stillness, we feel only the throbbing of One Infinite Heart. All things,— all souls of things, — are indissolubly one in the Eternal Love. Through all the universe there is no longer any sigh of separation.

"So, when for us life's evening hour
Soft falling shall descend,
May glory born of earth and heaven
The earth and heavens blend; —

"Flooded with peace the spirits float,
With silent rapture glow,
Till where earth ends and heaven begins
The soul shall scarcely know."

THE GOD OF THE OPEN

I will lift up mine eyes unto the mountains;
From whence shall my help come?

Psa. cxxi: 1.

In all ages and in all literature, the mountains have stood for permanence and strength. There is a restful assurance about them that inspires our faith in their stability. There is a sort of friendliness about the mountains, a frank, open-hearted kindliness, that disarms suspicion and calls forth the larger and finer impulses of a man's soul. Who that has followed the thin trail as it winds up the mountain-side, has not felt the strange spell of a nameless peace as he has stood in the silence of the templed trees, where even the whistle of a bird seems a sacrilege and the crackling of the twigs under his feet a profanation? Or who has bared his brow to the fresh winds that slip across the peaks, and looked down from the morning height upon the feverish world, "where little men of little minds rise up to eat and sleep again," and not felt something of life's bigness sweep across his soul, and something of the hidden meaning of it flash upon his spirit?

There is a subtle magic in the mountains that steals into the human heart and mellows it, until it feels its kinship with Nature; and flower, and forest, and chattering brook, and bird, and beast, and man seem parts of one inclusive Whole and members one of another. There, too, if anywhere, in the solitude of the mountains, the thoughts of men grow holy and the soul is purged of its baseness and its low desires.

The sea is restless and ever-shifting. It dances in tiny wavelets in the morning sun, then suddenly bursts into fury, and claws and tears itself like a madman. It coaxes and caresses, it dimples and smiles, it roars, and dashes, and foams, and rages. It whispers soft as a lover, and lies quiet and still as a sleeping child, but it is always the restless sea, the changeable, fickle sea, the wanton and capricious sea. And they that go down to the sea in ships sail ever in the shadow of a great uncertainty, and are glad when from the dim haze of the horizon they see the heads of the eternal hills lift themselves in everlasting calm.

I do not wonder that the ancients regarded the mountains as the home of the gods, and peopled the peaks with sacred spirits. I think I can understand why Zeus held court on old Olympus, and how there arose the story of Moses ascending mysterious Sinai to find the

tables of stone, written by the finger of the Hebrew Jahweh. No one who has ever seen the Jungfrau with the Alpine glow upon it, burning with a strange red fire long after the night had crept into the valleys and wrapped the villages that cluster there in darkness and gloom, can marvel that to the dwellers on the plains the mountains should seem like an altar of the Eternal and a meeting-place for the immortal gods.

I think I can understand, too, something of David's feeling when, in the midst of his troubled life, beaten and bruised in his struggle, and wellnigh discouraged by the endless conflict, he turned from the great tabernacle with its smoking altars, its gorgeous priests and its finished ritual, which represented the religion of his people, and looked away unto the imperturbable mountains for a strength and solace he could find nowhere else.

> I will lift up mine eyes unto the mountains:
> From whence shall my help come?
> My help cometh from the Lord,
> Which made heaven and earth.

To every free and untrammeled spirit, there comes many a season of revolt against the organized religion and crystallized cult of his day. He seems stifled by the narrowness and rigidity of ecclesiasticism. He would leave the

pent-up air of the cloisters, heavy with incense, and would climb the everlasting hills and drink in the golden glory of the morning sun. He would exchange the droning of priests for the murmur of bees in the open, and the formal chanting of choirs for the twitter of birds in the woodland. He would add his song to the hymn of praise that rises spontaneously from the heart of Nature to the great God of Nature. He would draw down the inspiration of his life from the Lord of life, which made heaven and earth.

There are times when the soul stands in the midst of all the riches of form and ceremony with which the church has adorned its worship, and feels its utter poverty of spirit. There are seasons when the most complete systems of faith and the most perfect theologies are but as the dust and chaff of the threshing-floor to the starved heart of the God-seeker. There are times when there is borne in upon us a strong sense of the inadequacy of organized religion, as it stands to-day, to satisfy our longings and to meet the deepest needs of our life. Our heart and our flesh cry out for God, for the living God, who is too big to be penned up in any temple, or to be the God of any cult or of any people.

I think it was some such feeling as this that stirred the breast of the Psalmist, and led him

forth from the artificial thing that represented the religion of his day, to find his God in the sunlit fields. It was in some such hour, when the futility of the gorgeous temple service pressed itself upon him, that David turned away from it all and lifted his face to the mountains, that stood there serene and calm, with their unbowed heads reaching up into God's sunshine, or piercing the night with their silent peaks, and found in their quiet strength and steadfastness a symbol of the Eternal Keeper of Israel and the sleepless Watcher over human destiny.

There is that, in this desire for a fresh, free access to the fountain head of spiritual experience, which appeals to a good many of us in these later days. We rebel against that doctrine which has held the thought of the church for so long, that the truth about divine things is to be found only in the deliverances of ecclesiastical councils, and that the Infinite can be caught in the net of theological definition. We refuse to believe that the God of the universe has shut himself up to a single mode of revelation and has suffered himself to be prisoned within the pages of any book. We hear much in these days about the spread of atheism and about the disregard of men for the church. I do not believe for a single moment that the age is growing godless. It cannot

be denied that there is a revolt against the shriveled caricature of God set forth by ecclesiasticism, a God satisfied with the little conventions of formal worship, with sacrifices, and ceremonials, and mechanical repetitions. Men are forsaking the God of the sanctuary, and the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, and are laying ahold heartily of the living God, who dwelleth not in temples made with hands. The movement of the present day is not an indication of an indifference of men for spiritual things, but a reflection upon the adequacy of the old methods and the old modes of thinking.

There is a tendency, now-a-days, to test our theories, as Whitman tested his poems, by uttering them in the open air. We bring them forth from the hot atmosphere of the schools, and try them out under the blue sky, where the winds blow and the light is white and clear. We are not seeking truth to-day in the dim religious twilight that filters through stained minster windows, nor do we try to kindle the torch of knowledge at the flickering candles that burn upon the silent altars. We are living out of doors, in these days, and in a world that is saturated with God. Coleridge has voiced the sentiment of many of us to-day, in his sonnet, "To Nature."

It may indeed be phantasy when I
Essay to draw from all created things
Deep, heartfelt, inward joy that closely clings;
And trace in leaves and flowers that round me lie
Lessons of love and earnest piety.
So let it be; and if the wide world rings
In mock of this belief, to me it brings
Nor fear, nor grief, nor vain perplexity.
So will I build my altar in the fields,
And the blue sky my fretted dome shall be,
And the sweet fragrance that the wild flower yields
Shall be the only incense I will yield to Thee,
Thee only God! and Thou shalt not despise
Even me, the priest of this poor sacrifice.

We find everywhere to-day a steady, persistent movement away from organized forms of religion and set modes of worship. There is nothing to alarm us or to make us fearful in this movement. It is both wholesome and healthful. It is the operation, in the religious world, of the same spirit which produced the humanistic revolution, and rescued art and education from the chilling, cramping atmosphere of the cloister. It is a recrudescence of the elemental instinct in all fine, free souls, that makes the universe God's temple and all life a worship. It draws no lines of boundary, to mark off the limits of God's activity, or to fix the frontier of divine revelation, but it sees a theophany in

every flower and every common bush afire with God. Every place is a holy place, and it finds

> Tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
> Sermons in stones, and good in every thing.

There are those who look upon the present tendency to "return to Nature" as a species of paganism, and the joyous, simple trust in the God of the open fields as a sort of heresy or an apostasy from the faith. But we turn from their feverish debates and sapless arguments about the being and attribute of God, and about atonements, and justifications, and modes of worship, and forms, and ceremonies, and, like the Psalmist of old, we lift our eyes unto the mountains and go God-seeking amid the work of God's own hands. As Wordsworth cried in the weariness of his soul:

> Great God! I'd rather be
> A Pagan, suckled in a creed outworn:
> So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
> Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
> Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
> Or hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn.

Call it paganism, if you will, there is little in names after all, but the fact is that it is only an emergence from the treadmill routine of ecclesiasticism, with its peddling conventions and its false emphases, into the infinite sweep of

things, where day unto day uttereth speech and night unto night showeth knowledge. It is an exchange of the written law of man for the unwritten law of the Lord, which God has woven into the heart of things, and which, when found, maketh wise the simple, rejoiceth the heart, enlighteneth the eyes, and endureth forever. We prefer to believe that the God of the universe reveals himself in the mind of man and in the processes of Nature more than in any book or in any institution.

The attitude of David toward the organized religion of his day, though it may have represented only a momentary outburst of sentiment, a temporary elevation of soul above the smoke and incense of the altar, appeals to us very strongly as Unitarians. We do not stand for freedom from worship, though we have often been accused of it, but we stand for freedom in worship. We are not willing to be bound down by any hard and fast rules as to what we shall believe. We claim a right to a free faith. We have grown weary of the everlasting jangle over creeds and confession, we are tired of the stilted jargon of the schools. If we turn away from these things as inadequate and of small moment compared with the big things of God and Man, it is because these petty devices cannot satisfy the longings and yearnings of our hearts, nor the aspirations

of our spirits. We are seeking a God who cannot be coaxed to live in little temples of mortar and stone, nor shut into revelations made to a single people or in a single book. We are looking for the God of the Universe, and we believe that the place to find him is in the Universe itself. We insist, therefore, on being allowed to go out alone, unaccompanied by priest or prelate, to find him for whom our soul longeth, under the stars of night, and in the blue of noon, when silence sits upon the mountain-tops, and the finite loses itself in the Infinite. We do not claim any special revelation. We simply bow our heads before the

"Something that we name and cannot know,"

and trust the "Eternal Goodness." To those who would question us, we reply in the simple words of Whittier:

"I trace your lines of argument;
Your logic linked and strong,
I weigh as one who dreads dissent,
And fears a doubt as wrong.

"But still my human hands are weak
To hold your iron creeds:
Against the words ye bid me speak
My heart within me pleads.

"Who fathoms the Eternal Thought?
Who talks of scheme and plan?

The Lord is God! He needeth not
The poor device of man.

"I walk with bare, hushed feet the ground
Ye tread with boldness shod;
I dare not fix with mete and bound
The love and power of God."

AUTHORITY IN RELIGION

Every religion, no matter what its form, lays claim to a most substantial authority. All faiths have their final standard to which are referred all matters of belief and practice for determination. The search for an infallible norm of belief and conduct arises from a variety of motives. It may be due to a genuine desire to know the truth with certainty, to possess a place of refuge from the tormenting pursuit of doubt. It may grow out of a wish to be free from the labor incident upon forming our own moral judgments, or out of an attempt to shift moral responsibility from our own shoulders to some external authority. It is much easier to get our morals ready-made. At any rate, we see men everywhere casting about for some infallible rule of faith and practice, for some sort of religious yard-stick, by which they may take the moral measure of things. The effort seems to be less to secure spiritual insight and moral discernment than to find some mechanical contrivance to take their place,—some outside oracle, some automatic conscience.

These attempts to secure an infallible stand-

ard have resulted in locating supreme religious authority either in the Church, as do the Romanists; or in the Bible, as do the Protestants; or in reason, as do the rationalists. Some thinkers would find the source of authority in all three. That there must be some place whence issues a moral imperative scarcely needs argument. That there must be a forum somewhere to pronounce moral judgments, every man who believes in the existence of a moral order must admit. But where? Where is the seat of religious authority? Conceding that the Church is possessed of authority, is the authority infallible? To which church does it belong? Does infallibility lie with the Bible rather than with the Church, or with reason rather than with the Church or Bible, or with all three? Which is *the* infallible source of doctrine and discipline?

The determination of the question is much simplified by a consideration that is usually overlooked, namely, that in the very nature of things *there can be no infallible authority*, either in a corporation, a literature, or in pure reason. History is too full of the mistakes of church courts and ecclesiastical councils to justify any serious mind in yielding to that great corporate body an absolute inerrancy. The old dictum that whatever is held by all the church, always, and everywhere, must be true, has re-

ceived too many staggering set-backs to be of any value, save as a sort of theological curio. The charred bones of the martyrs, who were first cauterized and then canonized, are a poor argument for the infallibility of the church. The mere aggregation of ecclesiastics in conference may give greater plausibility to their deliverances, by reason of the consensus of opinion, but it does not invest those deliverances with the slightest degree of infallibility. The church vehemently asserted that the sun revolves around the earth, and this declaration was believed by all the church, everywhere, and had been believed for all time; but, while this emphatic assertion may have served the questionable purpose of detecting heretics, it had no appreciable effect on the facts of the celestial economy. Whenever the church, in any age, has arrogated to herself infallibility, and has insisted on the absolute inerrancy of her dogmatic positions, she has had to recede from those positions over and over again; and yet, with a strange inconsistency, she has often yielded the specific point at issue, and has gone on calmly maintaining her infallibility. Truth flows into the thought and life of the world through human channels. The great prophets have been men of like passions with the rest of us — otherwise they could not have been prophets. It does not affect the limitations of

a man to be chosen as the vehicle through which some great truth utters itself. No truth, therefore, gets into human life that does not partake of the liabilities of the human agent through which it finds expression. All revelation is partial and incomplete. This fact, as Dr. Martineau has well said, "will surprise no one who remembers that in the weaving of history two agents are inseparable partners; and that where the pattern is most divine, the web that bears it must still be human. Whatever higher inspiration visits our world must use our nature as its organ, must take the mold of our receptive capacity and mingle with the existing life of thought and affection. How, then, can it both assume their form and escape their limitations? How flow into the current of our minds without being diluted there? How dissolve itself in them without any taint from their impurity? You cannot receive the light on a refracting surface, and yet expect it to pursue its way still straight and colorless. And the soul of a man, especially of one fit to be among the prophets of the world, is not like a crystal, a dead medium of transmission, which once for all deflects what it receives and has done with it; but a living agent whose faculties seize on every influence that falls upon them, with action intenser as the appeal is more awakening. If in your silent musings some deep word of God

should come to you, some tone of tender and solemn conviction, lifting you and placing you where you had never been before, would you not think of it? Would you not adjust its place with the faiths that were dearest to you before? Would it not run up into every love and hope that you have, and flow from your lips in their speech and pass into your life in their guise? Instead of suspending your natural faculties and coming out of them as it went in, it would but quicken reason, imagination, affection, and multiply their combinations yet without affecting their resources. The flash of vision which bursts into the mind may be itself a light from heaven; but it can only illuminate the scene on which it falls; and, while it pierces every recess, it does but touch with glory what already lies around, the thoughts and admirations which furnish the chamber of the soul, and the far-stretching ideals which spread as the night-field beyond the windows of her home. Come whence it may, from Nature or from Grace, new truth, once committed to the mind, falls into fallible custody; and the more it possesses the soul, the more will it be worked into the tissue of prior conceptions, retinting their imagery, reasoned into their theory, flung into the forms of their language; so that it cannot even issue at first hand from the inspired prophet himself, except on the intellectual air

of his time and in the dialect of his people or of his school."

This same blending of the divine and the limited human is found in the Bible. In the very nature of things the Bible cannot be infallible. Nor can any other book or system of books. For, if we are to have an infallible literature, we must have along with it, in order to make the revelation infallible, an infallible language, an infallible interpreter, and an infallible listener. Let inerrancy fail at any one point, and the result is a partial and incomplete revelation. Now, no book was ever written that has given rise to so many divergent theories, opinions and beliefs as the Bible. No two sects agree in their interpretation, nor do any two men, anywhere in Christendom, coincide in their religious views, each of whom bases his theology on Holy Writ. If, then, the Bible is infallible, its infallibility is of little practical worth to the world, apart from an infallible interpreter and language,— which we do not possess. The Bible is God's book for man, written with a man's pen and in a man's tongue. Out of its pages divine truth flashes and flames, kindling the souls of men into a holy fire. From prophet and psalmist and gospeller there come divine voices, appealing to the best there is in us, and awakening hopes that are eternal. And a spirit quivers and pulses in the book that

touches the heart of the world with a strange power, and makes for a larger and truer life. Of making many books there is no end. The world is full of volumes through which the thought of man has tried to utter itself. Like the leaves of the forest when autumn has come, these books have fluttered down into a nameless oblivion. There are some works that have resisted the tooth of time, and there are some examples of modern literature which, to individuals, speak with greater power than anything in the Bible. But, as Dr. James Drummond puts it, "it remains to be seen whether such writings will wear, whether they will last through the centuries and spread over many lands and be cherished among rich and poor, learned and unlearned, as a source of life and healing. There are a few works, such as the Confessions of Augustine, the Imitation, and the Pilgrim's Progress, which have stood the test of permanence and wide diffusion; but all these bear witness to the Bible, and are only the fruitful branches of the vine, the roots of which go down into Hebrew prophecy and the teaching of Christ and his apostles. We cannot reverse the facts of history and glorify the works of Emerson and Carlyle with the blood of martyrs, the faithfulness of confessors, the victorious purity of unnumbered saints and the hallelujahs of ten thousand churches. And

strange as it may appear to those who are under the influence of reaction, it is simply the fact, that on the Christian soul, in its anguish of sorrow or sin, the words of the Bible drop as with the power of God; and it listens entranced, as though the heavens were opened, and the Father's voice spoke to the very trial of the moment." It is not the Bible that is to be given up, but that theory of universal inspiration, which places Esther on a level with Isaiah, and exalts a page of imprecations to the rank of the Sermon on the Mount.

But is there no source of authority in religious things? There most assuredly is, but it is not an infallible authority. For the soul that is truly alive, there is no Delphic Oracle, there are no Sibylline Leaves, there is no holy place anywhere, to which one may go to find a truth unmixed with human liability. The pilgrim to the sacred shrine bears in his own bosom a limitation from which he cannot escape. The truth that comes to him is bounded by his own capacity, and he spells out the message in the alphabet of his own experience. It must be so. No matter what theory one may hold as to the authority of the Church or Book, as a matter of fact the ultimate authority lies elsewhere. We come to the deliverances of the Church and to the Bible with a discrimination, with a faculty of moral and spiritual judgment,

which, in spite of our theories, passes upon the divine value of the things found. In all our experience we submit everything that comes within the range of our life to three ultimate tests: physical things we try by physical rules, intellectual propositions we test by reason, and moral questions we submit to conscience. No one of these tests gives us an infallible result, but they are the best we have, and, for that reason, must be for us our final authority. However much we may claim to attribute an infallible authority to the Bible, yet, in our interpretation of it, it is our reason and our moral sense that determine what we do really get from it. No man can hold to the dogma of plenary inspiration, and retain his moral sanity or his intellectual integrity. Claim for the Bible inerrancy, if you will, but no man can believe that a passage like this: "Blessed is he that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against a rock," or the fearful imprecations of the 109th Psalm, are inspired of God, that is, inspired of a God that is worthy a decent man's respect. "The religious idea of God must claim, and justify itself to, the highest known morality, and no amount of authority, ecclesiastical or civil, will make men worship an immoral God. And already that truth has thrown its light back upon questions of Old Testament morality. We no longer say, 'It is in the Bible,

approved or allowed of God, and therefore must be right.' It is this view which, in every age, has given its protection to religious wars, and intolerance, and persecution."

The truth uttered in the Bible,— and there is a vast treasure of it,— has come down to us hampered by human limitation, colored by human prejudice and tainted by human imperfection. In order to get the truth that is bedded in the book, we must appeal past the letter of it to the spirit that attests itself to our own better selves,— and to that spirit only. For, after all is said, it is the man himself who is the final authority, not the Church or the book. The man gets from each no more than he brings spiritual eyes to see and spiritual ears to hear. However much we may seek an outside authority, located in a corporate body, a book, or in a confession of faith, yet, in very deed and truth, the ultimate appeal is not to these things, but to the organ of spiritual sense, through which each man of us interprets these various symbols for himself. We may claim adherence to an external rule, but as a matter of fact our appeal is to our own reading of the moral law, written on the tablets of our own conscience. Creeds, confessions, Bibles, even the idea of God that men would make us believe in, are summoned before the bar of our spiritual judgment, and all that falls below the highest

level of our moral thinking we reject, no matter how many ecclesiastical councils may have declared it or how many sacred books have lent their sanction to it.

It may be urged at this point, that such a throwing of a man back upon his own spiritual sense for his moral truths, or at least for final judgment upon moral truths, is a dangerous independence fraught with many an evil. Dangerous or not, it is the best we have. Better the most imperfect moral judgment, where a man honestly uses his spiritual discernment and exercises the highest faculty of his soul, than any limp acquiescence in dogmatic formulas, however well-knit their logic, where the spirit slumbers and the conscience is denied full and independent play. Let us have those who think *with* us, but never those who think *for* us. Borrow another man's fire,— that we must usually do,— but burn your own torch. That is what it was given you for.

No authority in religious matters can be infallible. But the truest insight a man can get comes to him when, with a great hunger and thirst after righteousness, he appeals past the churches, past the books, and past the creeds,— all of them man-made,— to the divine spirit that temples in every sincere soul. It may be asked whether these conclusions drawn even from a quickened spiritual vision will not be

diverse? Is there any guarantee of unanimity? No, no more than there is in the interpretation of an external authority. I point simply to the hundred sects of Christendom, each based on the translation of a phrase of the Bible, the shading of a vowel or the crossing of a "t," and remark that there could scarcely be more diversity than at present. But will not this inward monitor be wrong often? Yes, wrong often and imperfect always. Wrong because of the bents and prejudices and passions of men; imperfect because of the limitations of human capacity. But are the bents and prejudices and passions eliminated, are the limitations incident upon our very humanness removed, when we pass from making judgments upon our highest spiritual experiences to the making of judgments upon the deliverances of an ecclesiastical council or upon the exact meaning of a Hebrew verb or a Greek tense? Are the judgments passed upon a book or a creed, fashioned in language that must be ambiguous and open to as many interpretations as there are readers, are these judgments, I say, less liable to error than the judgments formed in a man's soul when his spirit receives upon it the touch of God's spirit?

No one more appreciated the worth of a man's power of moral discrimination than did Jesus. He was all the time throwing his hearers back

on their own critical faculty. He stated his case and forced a moral judgment. He insisted in pressing back of all literalism to the spirit of things. In making his own moral decisions, he did not appeal to the letter of Scripture, but he tested the letter by the spiritual monitor that sits within the soul of every man of us. When a certain lawyer came to him with a test question involving a matter of ethics, Jesus told the story of the Good Samaritan, and then turning to the questioner he set him squarely in front of a moral judgment: "Which of these two thinkest THOU was neighbor to him that fell among the thieves?" He did not hold the attorney to some quibble of the book, but he made him bring the point at issue to the bar of his own spiritual discrimination. And when the man had made his decision, Jesus confirmed the judgment. When, on one occasion, Jesus had broken the letter of the law respecting Sabbath observance, and the officials of the church had taken him to task for it, Jesus, in his defense, appealed past the written law to that higher law that is woven into the very fiber of our being. He did not say, "Is it written thus and so?" but he did say, "Is it lawful to do good or evil on the Sabbath day?" Lawful by what code? By the statutes of conscience, by the code that every man carries graven into his moral nature.

The whole effort of Jesus was not to bring men into subjection to a corporate body, or in bondage to a literature, but to secure for them spiritual liberty. He would unbind their souls, set them upon their feet, and loose their spiritual powers.

This perception of moral values is the highest faculty of the human soul. This inner vision, this spiritual intuition, this ability to discern good and evil, this special sense for knowing God at first hand, is not the exclusive prerogative of church councils or of the compilers of theological formulas. It is the pearl of great price, which the least man of us possesses, or may possess if he will. For there is a spiritual sense. Like a musical sense, men have it in varying degrees. In spite of materialistic sneers, moral intuition exists. The soul is organized for spiritual knowledge, and that knowledge comes to it in many ways. Have you never noticed, as you have gone singing about the room, and have suddenly broken off in the midst of a note, how the string of the instrument near you, piano, harp, guitar, took up the broken tone and sung it back to you? Not every string would answer, but only that which was tuned to the same note. The vibration of your voice called out a sympathetic vibration in the string. So in every rudest life there is something that answers

to the heavenly voices, and in the great heart of the Infinite Life there is a chord that sings its answer to every call of the human soul. It may be but a monotone that our little life gives forth, a trembling, feeble monotone, but as it cries out its dull note there comes back to the listening soul a divine response. For,

> "Even in savage bosoms
> There are strivings, yearnings, longings,
> For the good they comprehend not;
> And the feeble hands and helpless,
> Groping blindly in the darkness,
> Touch God's right hand in the darkness
> And are lifted up and strengthened."

There is no need of media, or agencies, to bring the wistful soul into the presence of the Eternal. It was a wonderful picture that John gave us, as he dreamed in Patmos' solitude, of the Holy City, the city that lieth four-square. The walls of the city of God faced north and east and south and west, and each was pierced by a triple gate, that was never shut. It is a very beautiful vision of a great, comforting truth, that wherever a man may be, in all God's earth, he can go from where he is straight up through the welcoming gate into the presence of God. The Bible may be a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path, the voice of priest or of pastor, even the deliverances of churches, may

serve to guide us in the way; but better than all, and higher than all, is the passing of a soul, for itself, into the presence of the Infinite Spirit, that is not far from any one of us at any time.

Wherever a soul has spiritual ears to hear, the deep of God's life calls ever unto the deep of man's life. It is said that on the shores of the Adriatic, the wives of the fishermen go down to the sea at dusk, and, as the night shuts in, they sing to the murmuring waters their folk-songs and hymns. Then they listen,— and presently the darkness replies with the same familiar words in the voices of the fathers, singing their loving answer out of the heart of the shadow. Then the mothers go home again to their hearth-stone, with the music still crooning in their bosom. But the bustling life of the town goes on, and none hear the love-song from the sea, save they that are homesick for it,— and listen. Even so does God's truth come into the world,— a still, small voice, singing its way through the dark, a love-song for the listeners, a gospel for the homesick.

TO AN UNKNOWN GOD

Acts xvii: 23.

ATHENS! The very name opens the tombs of countless centuries and calls forth Art's mighty dead; the keen mind of the philosopher, who grappled with the great problems of being and thought his way toward the light, awakens from its long slumber; and the tongue of Eloquence, molded to dust ages agone, trembles again down the still corridors of time. Modern Greece? There is no modern Greece. As Metternich once said of Italy, it is only a "geographical expression," a quantity negligible in the affairs of the modern world. Who thinks of Greece to-day but as the home of an ancient glory and the seat of a departed worth? At the mere mention of Athens, the mind forgets the intervening years, and, building anew the crumbling ruins of temple and theater and market place, it peoples them again with the Immortals of the past. Homer and Pindar, Sophocles and Æschylus, Phidias and Praxiteles, Plato and Aristotle, Thucydides and Herodotus, with the multitude of the great in literature and

art and philosophy, in poetry and the drama, in politics and history surge through the ancient streets. Again does Socrates teach morals to the Grecian youth, and the blood leaps afresh at the ringing sentences of Pericles and Demosthenes. And the gods of Greece come back to their deserted altars, the fires burn anew at the shrines of Zeus, and Hera, and Hermes, and the god of War, while Orpheus breathes again into his singing pipes, and old Poseidon trumpets from the wrinkled sea. For the moment, beguiled by the subtle touch of memory, we forget that Athens,

> "the eye of Greece, mother of arts
> And eloquence,"

is dead, and that the gods, whose statues thronged her Pantheon, have also

> "passed and gone with a vanished age."

Time makes few distinctions. Like a sightless beast it gnaws at the roots of things, caring nothing for human values and human estimates. How many civilizations have set themselves proudly in the earth and flung their banners to the wanton winds; have builded their temples and pierced the blue sky with towering monuments, and then, like a spluttering candle that burns low in its socket, have gone out in darkness and in night?

"I met a traveler from an antique land
Who said: Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. Near them, on the sand,
Half-sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on those lifeless things,
The hand that mock'd them and the heart that fed:
And on the pedestal these words appear:
'My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!'
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away."

No form of culture, or of cult, bears within itself a guarantee of immortality. Philosophies and religions, with all the myriad hosts that nourished them, have one after another been buried by the drift of years. The gods and their worshipers alike have lain down together in a common grave. Where now is the great Zeus, or what has happened to the power of Jupiter, at whose nod the earth trembled and the seas piled up their waves? In vain do we look for Ahura Mazda, and the might of Ammon has become a myth.

Wandering through the statue-studded streets of Athens, Paul, the preacher and prophet of a new cult, chanced upon a shrine dedicated to a god whose very name had slipped from the memory of man. The eager, restless souls of a

later age, striving to find a satisfaction for the yearning of the human spirit, had kindled again the fires upon the ancient altar and had graven upon its crumbling side the inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. How vain was their effort the subsequent history of the world has abundantly proven, for the gods that they then knew, and the god whom they did not know, have vanished together. For nothing human, neither its institutions nor its conceptions of God, can escape the inexorable mortality which has marked them for its own. Even the gods die. And the God of Paul, the God of Moses, the God of Jesus, shall He, too, die?

I suppose that it is a distinctive mark of every age, to look upon its own philosophy and its own theories of things as the final flowering of human thought. But Time, which dispels many an illusion, has never yet set a seal upon the mind of man, nor erected barriers beyond which research may not penetrate. The path of human progress is strewn thick with the wrecks of many a cast-off creed and of many an outworn philosophy. "Doubtless," said Count D'Alviella, "the world may still witness many philosophic revolutions and reactions. If we may read the future in the past, religions may yet follow and replace each other; forms of worship may arise as different from ours as the synagogue was from the temple, or the

churches of the early Christians from the pagan sanctuaries. Attributes which many of us regard as essential to the Deity may be canceled by the theological system which shall gain the ascendant. We or our children may have to relinquish many a cherished conception of the action of God and the destiny of man. Nay, "God" may die, as his known and unknown predecessors — the Baalim and the Teotl, Assur and Ammon, Odin and Jupiter, have died; as his contemporaries of to-day, the Brahm of Hindustan, the Allah of Islam, Ormuzd "Lord Omniscient," Thian "the Celestial Emperor," and even Yahweh "The Holy One of Israel" shall one day die; but what cannot die is the conception, enshrined in these names, of a mysterious and superhuman Power, realizing himself in all the laws of the known universe, revealing himself to man in the voice of conscience and the spectacle of the world.

"Here we have the truth which will remain when it has freed the conception of the Deity from all the confusions which originally covered it, and the parasitical accretions which have since laid hold of it; when it has stripped off, as so many borrowed plumes, anthropomorphic attributes and moral limitations, and has set forth the existence of deity as Unity and the action of deity as Harmony. Here, then, we stand at last before the impenetrable veil which will ever

separate the Deity, in its grandeur and its majesty, from our eyes, but which does not cut off either the manifestations of its power or the revelations of its law, or, may be, even the mysterious radiation of an attractive force answering to our terms of sympathy and love."

There is a truth, a mighty truth, which we, bound by our little iron creeds, are very apt to miss: that God is greater than any thought of him which our weak philosophies may hold at any time.

"Our little systems have their day;
They have their day and cease to be;
They are but broken lights of thee,
And thou, O Lord, art more than they."

Poor fools that we are, not to see that the dead gods are only the dead thoughts of men, *names* of a passing and temporary conception of the imperishable Soul of Things, whose bigness refuses to be snared in the meshes of our philosophy. The deserted altars of the old deities are the mile-stones of human advancement. The ancient divinities fade before the fresh glimpses which the human spirit gets of the white radiance of the Eternal. The world climbs upward, and its horizon broadens at every step. In the course of time men must leave the shrines of former gods behind them and push steadily on. There is an evolution of

ideas and of ideals, as well as of things and of institutions, and the "thoughts of men are widened with the process of the suns." For every new idea an old idea must perish, and new ideals dig the graves of their predecessors. Life is born of death, and the living God of any age builds his altars on the ruins of the dead gods of the past.

A noted German has written a sentence that is frequently quoted: "So wie die Völker sich bessern, bessern sich auch ihre Götter." As peoples improve, so do their gods improve also. Man grows with the growth of his aims and with his growth grow the gods. The gods of men are made out of the highest values with which men have become acquainted in their own experience. It must be so. We have no terms in which to think or in which to record our conceptions of moral worth save such as we have derived from our own struggle for existence. "Values must ever be discovered and produced in the world of experience before they can be conceived or assumed to exist in a higher world. The other world must always be derived from this world: it can never be a primary concept. It changes with the changes of this world. The content of religion always points back to life in the world of experience, and without a knowledge of this life would be incomprehensible." Each age evolves its own God, and it creates

him out of its own fine ideals of goodness and beauty and truth. We of this Twentieth Century do not worship the God of our fathers. We have left the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob, the God of Jesus and of Paul and of Calvin, aye, the God of yesterday, behind us and are clutching for ourselves at the skirts of the Infinite. We are making our thought of God correspond to our own daily experience. The God of Abraham *was* the God of Abraham. The God of Calvin *was* the God of Calvin. But the God of to-day is larger than the finest thought of all the past, and is the reflection of the holiest conceptions of the modern world. As Browning puts it,

"In man's self arise
August anticipations, symbols, types
Of a dim splendor ever on before
In that eternal circle life pursues.
For men begin to pass their nature's bound,
And find new hopes and cares which fast supplant
Their proper joys and griefs; they grow too great
For narrow creeds of right and wrong, which fade
Before the unmeasured thirst for good."

The God of Abraham and of Moses and of Calvin is dead, the narrow-minded cruel God of a narrow-minded and cruel age, and we of to-day, while we still retain the name "God," have nevertheless grasped the old and "sorry

scheme of things" and have "remoulded it nearer to our heart's desire."

The conception of every age is only the serious attempt of our limited human mind to comprehend the Infinite. This attempt, in the very nature of things, must always result in partial and imperfect ideas, blind gropings after the

> "Somewhat that we name and cannot know,
> Ev'n as we name a star and only see
> His quenchless flashings forth, which ever show
> And ever hide Him, and which are not He."

Timid souls are sometimes fearful lest faith is dying out of human life, and they think they hear

> "It's melancholy, long-withdrawing roar
> Retreating, to the breath
> Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear
> And naked shingles of the world."

But in very truth there never was a time in the long history of human kind when faith was keener or more insistent. Faith in God, in the living, growing God, saturates the thought of men. That men no longer believe in the old conceptions is no proof that they have no larger and truer conceptions of their own. "I believe in God." That is the heart of the world's credo to-day, but further than that they refuse

to go, to make the God of the larger life of the world identical with the pinched and inadequate conception of ages long since dead. Each civilization makes for itself its own God, and that God lives only as long as the civilization which created it. Zeus and Ammon, Yahweh and the God of the Middle Ages are dead because the systems that begot them have perished from the earth. Why should we cling to the vanished past, why should we limit our expanding minds to the petty stage of our father's and our father's father's, when for us to-day

> "Earth's crammed with heaven
> And every common bush afire with God?"

We do not deny the existence of the Eternal when we refuse to accept the conceptions which a long past age has held of him. It is not the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob that our souls long for, but the God of the living present, who calls to our souls out of the ruck and the confusion of life, and whose spirit, quivering in all that touches our daily experience, speaks to us in the language of our own hearts' daily needs. Each in his own tongue hears the whisper of God, *his* God, and not another's.

> "A fire-mist and a planet,
> A crystal and a cell,

A saurian and a jelly-fish,
And a cave where the cave-men dwell;
Then a sense of law and beauty,
And a face turned from the clod —
Some call it Evolution,
And others call it — God.

" A mist on the far horizon,
The infinite, tender sky,
The rich, ripe tints of the cornfield,
And wild geese sailing high;
And all over upland and lowland
The charm of the golden-rod —
Some of us call it Autumn,
And others call it — God.

" Like tides on a crescent sea-beach,
When the moon is new and thin,
Into our hearts high yearnings
Come welling and surging in,—
Come from that mystic ocean
Whose rim no foot has trod —
Some of us call it Longing,
And others call it — God.

" A picket frozen on duty,
A mother starved for her brood,
Socrates drinking the hemlock,
And Jesus on the rood;
And millions who, humble and nameless,
The hard, straight pathway plod —
Some call it Consecration,
And others call it — God."

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